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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 19 SEPTEMBER 2024 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 14 RABI'L, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 238 | Pages: 8

J&K votes after 10 yrs, records highest voter turnout with 59%

Voters show their inked fingers after casting votes during the first phase of Jammu and Kashmir polls, in Kishtwar, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, 18 SEPT

In the first Assembly polls in J-K since the abrogation of Article 370, enthusiastic voters queued up at polling stations to exercise their franchise in the Doda district of Jammu region, which has seen an increase in terror-related activities over the past few months.

The voting began at 7 am. A turnout of about 59 per cent-the highest in the past seven elections-was recorded in the first phase of Assembly polls, Chief Electoral Officer PK Pole said. The highest voting percentage was recorded in Padder-Nagseni at 80.67 per cent, followed by Inderwal at 80.06 per cent and Kishtwar at 78.11per cent. Doda West also recorded a high turnout of 70.21 per cent.

In the Kashmir valley, the Pahalgam segment recorded the highest turnout of 67.86 per cent. It was followed by DH Pora at 68 per cent, Kulgam at 62.70 per cent, Dooru at 57.90 per cent, and Kokernag (ST) at 58 per cent. The lowest recorded at Anantnag 44 per cent, they said.

- In the Kashmir valley, the Pahalgam segment recorded the highest turnout of 67.86 per cent.

The elections to the 90-member Assembly are the first since Article 370 granting special status to Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated and the state was downgraded into the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, in August 2019. The last Assembly elections were held in 2014.Of the 90 seats, 24 are voting in the first phase -- 16 in the Kashmir Valley and eight in Jammu region. Over 2.3 million voters are eligible to vote to determine the fate of 219 candidates, including 90 Independents.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the several leaders encouraging voters to come out in large numbers and take part in the "festival of democracy". Union Home Minister Amit Shah also appealed for a strong voter turnout to elect a government focused on youth education, employment, and women's empowerment while combating separatism. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge addressed voters, reminding them of the implications of the state's status change and urging them to safeguard their rights.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha also asked people, particularly youth and women, to exercise their democratic rights. The next phases are on 25 September and 1 October. *—PTI*

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China builds new heliport near Arunachal LAC

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

China is reportedly building a new heliport about 20km east of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), near the "Fishtails" region of Arunachal Pradesh. The construction site, located within the Gongrigabu Qu River area in the Nyingchi Prefecture of Tibet Autonomous Region, lies within undisputed Chinese territory. According to satellite imagery from EOS Data Analytics, construction began sometime after 1 December, 2023, with recent images indicating an advanced stage of development. Military sources monitoring the construction said the heliport will serve dual purposes, both military and civilian, facilitating swift troop deployments and enhancing China's defensive and offensive capabilities along the LAC. The heliport is also expected to boost the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) intelligence-gathering, surveillance, and reconnaissance activities. ***—Agencies***

Atishi to take oath as CM on 21 Sept: Sources

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena has in a communication to President Droupadi Murmu proposed 21 September as the date for the swearing-in of Chief Minister-designate Atishi, sources said on Wednesday. They said outgoing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's resignation letter has also been moved to Murmu. However, the sources said that the AAP legislature party has not proposed any date for the oath-taking ceremony of the chief minister-designate. Kejriwal tendered his resignation to the LG on Tuesday and Atishi staked claim to form a new government. ***—PTI***

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India abstains from UNGA vote on Israel to end occupation

UNITED NATIONS, 18 SEPT

India on Wednesday abstained in the UN General Assembly on a resolution that demanded that Israel bring an end, "without delay", to its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within 12 months. The 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution, with 124 nations voting in favour, 14 against and 43 abstentions, including that by India. Those abstaining included Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Nepal, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Israel and the US were among the nations who voted against the resolution. The Palestinian-drafted resolution also deplored the continued disregard and breaches by Israel of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. ***—PTI***

Cabinet accepts 'one nation, one election' proposal

The bill is likely to be introduced in upcoming Winter Session

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Moving ahead with its "one nation, one election" plan, the government on Wednesday accepted a high-level panel's recommendations for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner after a countrywide consensus-building exercise.

Asserting that several political parties are already on board, the government said even those parties that are opposed to it may now feel pressure from within to change their stand due to the widespread support on the issue from the people of the country.

Announcing the Union Cabinet's approval to the proposal, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said an implementation group would be formed to take forward the recommendations of the panel headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind and detailed discussions would be held on various fora across the country over the next few months.

Asked by reporters when the recommendations could be implemented and whether a bill would be brought in the upcoming winter session of Parliament, Vaishnaw evaded a direct reply but pointed out that Home Minister Amit Shah has said the government would implement it in its current tenure.

President Droupadi Murmu being presented a report on simultaneous polls by former president Ram Nath Kovind in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Sources in the government later said a singular bill or a set of bills will be brought before Parliamentthis Winter session. In its report submitted to the government in March, just before the general election was announced, the Kovind panel recommended implementing "one nation, one election" in two phases -- simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state assemblies in the first phase and elections for local bodies like panchayats and municipal bodies within 100 days of the general election in the second phase.

It also recommended a common electoral roll, which would need coordination between the Election Commission of India (ECI) and state election commissions.

At present, the ECI is responsible for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, while the local body elections for municipalities and panchayats are managed by the state election commissions. The Kovind panel has recommended 18 constitutional amendments, most of which will not need ratification by state Assemblies. However, these would require certain Constitution amendment bills that would have to be passed by Parliament.

Sources said the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of the government -- the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting 2029 and a provision for a unity government in cases like a hung house.

The issue of simultaneous polls has been on the BJP's election manifestoes as part of electoral reforms. *—PTI*

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CABINET APPROVES

₹2,104.06 cr for Chandrayaan-4 mission

₹1,236 cr for Venus Orbiter Mission to explore the planet

₹35,000 cr for PM-AASHA scheme to give essential commodities to farmers

₹24,475 cr subsidy on P&K fertilisers for rabi season

₹12,554 cr disaster relief for states

7 GUARANTEES IN MANIFESTO

Cong's Deepender Hooda during a rally in support of candidate from Kosli constituency Jagdish Yadav, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong vows MSP, caste survey in Haryana

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Ahead of the Haryana Assembly polls, Congress on Wednesday announced seven guarantees, including the promises of a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) and a caste survey, if voted to power.

The guarantees were launched in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Haryana Congress chief Udai Bhan, former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, and AICC senior observers for the Haryana polls Ashok Gehlot, Ajay Maken and Partap Singh Bajwa.

The other guarantees include empowerment of women, strengthening social security, secure future for the youth, welfare of families and houses for the poor.

Kharge said, "We will implement these guarantees and that is why we have named it 'Saat Vaade, Pakke Irade'."

Under the rubric 'empowerment of women', Congress promised gas cylinders for Rs 500 and monthly Rs 2,000 to every woman between 18-60 years.

To strengthen social security, the party promised a Rs 6,000 per month pension for the elderly, disabled, and widows, and reinstating the old pension scheme. The party also promised to provide 300 units of free electricity and free medical treatment of up to Rs 25 lakh.

Under farmers' welfare, the Congress promised a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP). It also assured a caste survey and the limit of creamy layer be increased from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. *—PTI*

India reports 2nd Mpox case from Kerala

MALAPPURAM, 18 SEPT

A 38-year-old man undergoing treatment in Kerala's northern Malappuram district has been confirmed to have contracted monkeypox (Mpox) infection, the State Health Department said on Wednesday. The man, who came to the State from the UAE recently, was already admitted to a hospital here with Mpox symptoms, Health Minister Veena George said in a Facebook post. The Minister requested people, including those coming from abroad with any symptoms, to inform them and seek treatment at the earliest. The man's samples were sent for testing and the results confirmed positive on Wednesday. Mpox infections are generally self-limiting, lasting between two and four weeks, and its patients usually recover with supportive medical care and management.

PHOTO: WHO

It is transmitted through prolonged and close contact with an infected patient.

It typically manifests itself with fever, rash and swollen lymph nodes and may lead to a range of medical complications. *—PTI*

INDIA ISSUES NOTICE TO PAK OVER INDUS WATER TREATY

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

India has served a formal notice to Pakistan seeking a review of the Indus Water Treaty, arguing that "fundamental and unforeseen" changes in the circumstances require a reassessment of the pact. India and Pakistan signed the IWT on 19 September, 1960, which sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides on the use of the waters fom various rivers. India's notification highlights fundamental changes in circumstances that require a reassessment of obligations under various articles of the treaty, a source said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SPICEJET OWES ₹800 CR IN STATUTORY DUES

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Spicejet, which is the sixth largest airline in India by number of domestic passengers carried, on Wednesday dsclosed that it had Rs 794 crore in pending statutory dues since assessment year 2010, according to its latest exchange filing.

The airline owes a total of Rs 426.8 crore in unpaid Tax Deducted at Source, Goods and Services Tax, and Provident Fund contributions, as per the company's preliminary placement document. Additionally, a disputed amount of Rs 367 crore was disclosed in the exchange filing on Tuesday.

The cash-strapped airline also disclosed that 36 of its 58 aircraft are grounded, "primarily" due to "alleged default" in payments to aircraft lessors, financial difficulties affecting aircraft maintenance, and the unavailability of components and spare parts. Spicejet also opened a Qualified Institutional placement (QIP) to raise Rs 3,000 crore on 16 September. *—Agencies*

Doctors continue dharna against the RG Kar Hospital rape and murder case, near Swasthya bhawan in Kolkata on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Docs' stir continues as talks with govt end in impasse

KOLKATA, 18 SEPT

The second round of talks between the agitating junior doctors and the West Bengal government to resolve the RG Kar impasse was held on Wednesday for two-and-a-half hours, officials said.

The delegation of around 30 medics reached the state secretariat Nabanna around 7.15 pm. The meeting with Chief Secretary Manoj Pant started around 7.30 pm and ended around 10 pm.

The protesting medics were again accompanied by stenographers to record the minutes of the meeting. Junior doctors agitating over RG Kar rape-murder on Wednesday said they will continue their sit-in and not join duty, despite the State appointing Manoj Kumar Verma as the new Kolkata Police chief. *—PTI*

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MIDDLE EAST ON EDGE

9 dead in Lebanon walkie-talkie blast

BEIRUT, 18 SEPT

Explosions went off in Beirut and multiple parts of Lebanon in an apparent second wave of detonations of electronic devices, Hezbollah officials and state media said Wednesday, reporting walkie-talkies and even solar equipment being targeted a day after hundreds of pagers blew up.

At least nine people were killed and 300 were wounded, the Health Ministry said.

Several blasts were heard at the funeral in Beirut for three Hezbollah members and a child killed by exploding pagers the day before, according to Associated Press journalists at the scene.

A Hezbollah official told the AP that walkie-talkies used by the group exploded. Lebanon's official news agency reports that solar energy systems exploded in homes in several areas of Beirut and in southern Lebanon, wounding at least one girl.

Lebanese soldiers gather outside a mobile shop after walkie-talkie explodes inside it **PHOTO: AP**

The new blasts hit a country still thrown into confusion and anger after Tuesday's pager bombings, which appeared to be a complex Israeli attack targeting Hezbollah members that caused civilian casualties, too. The attacksrenewed fears that the simmering conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could escalate into all-out war.

Israel began moving more troops to its border with Lebanon on Wednesday as a precautionary measure. *—AP*

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Court reserves bail order on BJP MLA Munirathna's plea

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

The Special Court for MLAs/MPs here reserved its order on BJP MLA N Munirathna's bail plea until Thursday. Counsel Surya Mukundaraj, representing the complainant, argued on Wednesday that granting bail could lead to the destruction of evidence, particularly since the incident occurred on the premises of the legislators' office. He urged the court to deny bail. Senior Counsel Ashok Harnalli, representing Munirathna, currently held at central prison here, countered that the complaint lacked details about when the alleged abuses took place, dating back to 2015 He contended that the notice should have been issued under Section 41A of CrPC (notice of appearance before a police officer), arguing that the charges against Munirathna do not apply in this case, and therefore bail should be granted. Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara told reporters that if forensic tests confirm that Munirathna's voice matches the audio clip, in which casteist slurs were allegedly made, the government would take action. *—PTI*

Craft exhibition at Hebbal starts tomorrow

MYSURU, 18 SEPT

JSS Mysore Urban Haat, Development Commissioner for Handicrafts and Garvi Gujarat will organise a craft exhibition from 20 to 29 September at its campus in Hebbal in Bengaluru. About 80 artisans, including those awarded national and state honours, from across the country, will showcase their craftsmanship at the exhibition, said K Jyothi, Director, . The exhibits include wooden carvings, stone sculptures, brass idols, wood inlay art, clay pots, paper crafts, gemstone jewellery, cotton garments, imitation jewellery, wooden artefacts, batik, Kalamkari paintings, leather goods, artistic leather sandals, Channapatna toys, Kasuti embroidery. *—Salar News*

World Tourism Day to be celebrated in Mysuru on 27 Sept

MYSURU, 18 SEPT

State Department of Tourism will celebrate World Tourism Day on Mysore Palace premises on 27 September and it will be themed on promoting peace and security of the people, Joint Director of Tourism MK Savitha said. As countries that are considered safe are attracting a large number of tourists every year, the State Tourism Department also decided to promote peace and safety during this year's Tourism Day celebrations, Savitha said during a meeting here to review the preparations. A procession will be taken out from Mysore Palace to Highway Circle to mark the celebrations in the City. She said Social Welfare and district in-charge minister HC Mahadevappa will launch the official website of the department on the same day. *—Salar News*

INDIA bloc will soon form govt at Centre, claims CM

Siddaramaiah lashes out at BJP over remarks against Rahul

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

INDIA bloc would soon form Government at the Centre, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah claimed on Wednesday as he predicted that the ruling NDA will not complete its five-year term. He also lashed out at the BJP over the recent statements of its leaders targeting former Congress President Rahul Gandhi.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not complete five years. I don't believe in predicting the future, but I'm still saying it based on the political developments," Siddaramaiah said.

"See with the support of JD(U) and (N) Chandrababu Naidu (of TDP), Modi is surviving. They may withdraw support any moment, what will happen then?" he said at a press conference at his home-office 'Krishna.'

Responding to claims by BJP that the government headed by him in the State may collapse any time, he said: "We have won 136 seats (in the 224 member Assembly). How will it fall? So don't give importance to such claims about our government's collapse."

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

"Rahul Gandhi can't be cowed down by threats and life threats. Unable to digest his popularity they are indulging in such things," he said. Citing the recent remarks by BJP leaders Tarvinder Singh Marwah, Ravneet Singh Bittu and Raghuraj Singh, as well as that of Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad, Siddaramaiah said they have directly threatened Gandhi.

Asked whether there is a threat to the life of Rahul Gandhi by BJP, Siddaramaiah said: "What else are they doing? They are issuing life threats. Rs 11 lakh to those who will cut the tongue of Gandhi? -- By issuing life threats, attempts are on to finish him off politically. Karnataka Congress and our government strongly condemn it."

> • Responding to claims by BJP that the government headed by him in the State may collapse any time, he said: "We have won 136 seats (in the 224 member Assembly). How will it fall? So don't give importance to such claims about our government's collapse."

"Issuing life threats is not a small matter, " he said. "By not taking any action, they are encouraging the accused persons who are making statements against Rahul....I urge criminal cases and strict action against them."

Siddarmaiah noted that Marwah had openly issued an assassination threat against Rahul Gandhi, wherein he said that 'Gandhi baaz aaja, nahi toh aane wale time mein tera bhi wohi haal hoga jo teri dadi ka haal hua (you better behave, or you will meet the same fate as your grandmother)'. *—PTI*

One Nation, One Election against federal system: CM

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

PHOTO: PTI

'One Nation, One Election' proposal approved by Union Cabinet is not only against the federal structure but also practically impossible to implement in India, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Wednesday. An important proposal like One Nation, One Election was rushed through without consulting Opposition parties and reveals the malicious intent of Narendra Modi-led Central government, Siddaramaiah said on X.

The Centre and the Prime Minister lacked the basic knowledge of what should be the priorities of a government. Unemployment is rampant across the country, inflation is destabilising the economy and people are suffering due to rising prices of essential commodities. Law and order has broken down nationwide, with atrocities against Dalits and women reaching alarming levels.

"Our party will oppose this proposal, which carries the hidden agenda of the ruling BJP, both inside and outside the Parliament. Public opinion across the country is also against the 'One Nation, One Election' system," he said.

State BJP President BY Vijayendra termed the Cabinet decision as historic. "Simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections will enable better utilisation of human resources, reduce the cost of elections and will usher in progress in the country at a rapid pace."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the policy is not possible in a democratic country like India. "Who created 'Operational Lotus'? (toppling non-BJP governments by luring Opposition MLAs), it is BJP. They are the ones who caused several elections. How can it (multiple elections) be stopped?" Shivakumar asked.

JD (S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy termed the recommendation as a "historic step" towards improving India's electoral system. *—Salar News*

No bail, strict laws soon for drug cases

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has announced that the government is considering introducing new legislation to impose stricter penalties under the existing drug laws to address the growing drug menace in Karnataka. According to the proposed changes, those arrested in drug-related cases will face a jail term of 10 years and will not be eligible for bail.

Siddaramaiah outlined the measures discussed during a meeting with senior officials, including Bengaluru Police Commissioner. The government will set up a task force comprising ministers from home, health, medical education, urban development and ITBT departments, with the aim of tackling the issue through coordinated efforts across these sectors, the Chief Minister said on Wednesday. The task force, led by the Home Minister, will be responsible for overseeing all drug control operations.

Siddaramaiah directed police to take stringent action against drug trafficking and abuse, particularly in areas known for high drug activity. Police inspectors in these areas will be held accountable if adequate action is not taken. The government is also focusing on involving students in drug-prevention efforts, with plans to introduce a student policing system in schools, colleges and hostels, supported by NCC and NSS units.

Siddaramaiah highlighted concerns about the unauthorised sale of synthetic drugs and psychotropic substances in medical shops, saying the licences of those involved in such activities would be revoked. *—Salar News*

WORKERS' STRUGGLES

Members of Karnataka Retired Employees' Organisation protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday, demanding including those who retired from 2022 to 2024 under 7th Pay Commission **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Orphange case: HC quashes case against NCPCR chief

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court has quashed the case against National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) chairperson Priyank Kanoongo, who was accused of trespassing into a Muslim orphanage comparing its conditions to life under Taliban.

The prosecution was dismissed by a single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna, and a detailed order is awaited. The case stemmed from a visit by Kanoongo and his team to Darul Uloom Sayideeya orphanage on 19 November, 2023.

The complaint alleged that Kanoongo entered the orphanage without permission, took photographs and videos, and posted comments on social media comparing the conditions to those under Taliban rule. *—PTI*

Mandya SP asks people to return back post violence

MANDYA, 18 SEPT

Mandya Superintendent of Police Mallikarjun Baladandi on Wednesday appealed to the residents who left Nagamangala town after the violence to return to their homes as normalcy was restored following the strict vigil initiated by department.

Fearing police arrest, people in Nagamangala left home and police will not initiate any action against the innocents, Baladandi said. Even people whose names have registered in the FIRs can return as it is not final. Police are verifying the CCTV and have arrested only the real culprits, he said.

The Superintendent of Police said they have filed 24 cases and arrested 55 people in the violence. Among the 55 arrested, two are from Kerala's Malappuram district: Yousuf and Naseer. They have been running shops for 18 years.

Mallikarjun Baladandi **PHOTO: (@MALLIKA16572429)**

As police have received newspaper reports of the presence of Bangladesh immigrants, police are investigating that angle also, he said. The SP said a team was formed to investigate youths circulating the videos of the violence on social media. *—Salar News*

3 stabbed during Ganesha procession

BELAGAVI, 18 SEPT

Three men were allegedly stabbed following a fight that broke out during a Ganesha procession, and immersion, in Belagavi, on Wednesday.

Darshan Patil, Satish Pujari and Praveen Gundyagol sustained injuries in the attack, . "The incident did not take place during the procession. What we have come to know is that there was a fight during the procession and police intervened and sent away both sides after warning, and procession had proceeded," Belagavi Commissioner Martin said. *—PTI*

HSRP installation deadline extended to 20 Nov in State

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

High Court on Wednesday granted an extension for the installation of High-Security Registration Plates (HSRPs) on motor vehicles, pushing the deadline to 20 November. The court was hearing appeals from advocates seeking additional time for vehicle owners to comply with the mandate.

Previously, the State government had set multiple deadlines for HSRP installation, with the latest one being 14 September. Despite this deadline, no penalties were enforced in the days leading up to the court's ruling. High Court's extension means that motorists can now install the secure plates without the worry of immediate fines.

The Karnataka government had initially planned a special drive starting 16 September to encourage compliance among vehicle owners who had not yet installed HSRPs. However, the court's decision provides additional breathing room for motorists, allowing them to complete the installation process at a more manageable pace.

PHOTO: PTI

Vehicle owners can apply for HSRPs through the Karnataka Transport Department's official website or the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) portal. *—Salar News*

STATE PUSHES FOR CHILD RIGHTS VIA GRAM SABHAS

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

A state-level round-table meeting was held on Wednesday to discuss advancing child rights through Gram Sabhas in rural Karnataka. The event at the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Commissionerate hall, saw participation from key stakeholders.

The initiative aims to foster friendly interactions between children and police stations improve the student-teacher ratio in rural schools, and empower children as active participants in local governance. National Administrator for Educo Guru Prasad said "Karnataka is leading by example. Our efforts are being noticed and replicated in other states." Educo, a public charitable trust. *—Salar News*

Wipro distributes scholarship to poor female students

MYSURU, 18 SEPT

Wipro is distributing a scholarship of Rs 24,000 each to 1,500 economically poor female students to pursue degree and professional courses in educational institutions across State. Wipro Santoor Scholarship scheme was introduced to promote higher education of girls studying in government schools, said Neeraj Khatri, Chief Executive at Wipro Consumer Care and Lighting Division. Girls studying Pre-University Courses (PUC), those who completed PUC or those enrolled in degree programmes can apply for the scheme. Sixty per cent scholarship will be distributed to female students studying humanities and 40 per cent to those studying professional courses. For details, they can call 7411654395. *—Salar News*

BENGALURU SPACE EXPO

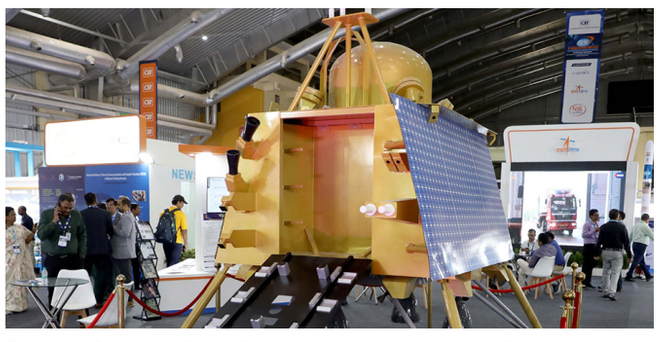
'State will soon have proper space policy'

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

State will soon introduce a comprehensive state space policy designed to foster investments, innovations and cutting-edge space technology, said Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday.

Kharge inaugurated the eighth edition of the Bengaluru Space Expo, organised by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (INSPACe), and NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in association with government.

The event, which will cover a diverse range of subjects in space sector, including India's Space Reforms and their influence on the sector, exploration of business opportunities within Indian space industries, and the socio-economic impact of space technologies, is being held till September 20 at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC).



This year, Bengaluru Space Expo has attracted more than 150 participants from 14 countries **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

In his inaugural address, Kharge, Minister for Electronics, IT/BT, highlighted how the global space economy, currently valued at USD 630 billion and expected to reach USD 1.8 trillion by 2035, presents immense opportunities to India and how Karnataka is at the heart of this transformation.

Pointing to Bengaluru-based space tech startup Pixxel, which recently secured a groundbreaking contract with NASA, joining their USD 476 million commercial smallsat data acquisition programme, the minister said this milestone underscores Karnataka's evolution from ISRO's home to a vibrant space startup hub, reaffirming its global leadership in the sector.

This year, the exhibition has attracted more than 150 participants from 14 countries. Over 160 space companies are participating in the three-day exhibition that is expected to attract 10,000 visitors.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is cricketer Steve Waugh, who is presiding over as the brand ambassador for Space MAITRI mission (Mission for Australia-India Technology, Research.

Together with two Indian companies – Ananth Technologies and Digantara Australia will launch its next spacecraft in 2026. *—PTI*

1 migrant worker dies in LPG gas explosion in City

4 houses were completely destroyed & 12 partially destroyed **PHOTO: ANI**

BENGALURU, 18 SEPT

A migrant worker from Uttar Pradesh, who was undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital after a gas explosion in Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, succumbed to her injuries on Wednesday.

The explosion occurred following an LPG gas leak at the residence of Annadurai, 40, in Old Baiyappanahalli around 6.50am on Monday.

Four houses were completely destroyed and 12 were partially destroyed in the explosion. The victim, Rekha 30, resided in the neighbourhood along with her 10-year-old daughter and husband, Bindersh (40).

The blast injured Rekha's family and Annadurai, and they were taken to Victoria Hospital for treatment. Annadurai is in serious condition, while Bindersh and their daughter are undergoing treatment for minor injuries. Rekha died during treatment on Wednesday evening. The family of the victim demanded compensation for the loss from the government. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Court rejects plea for FIR against Owaisi, Akhilesh

VARANASI, 18 SEPT

A local court here dismissed a petition seeking legal action against Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi for allegedly making derogatory remarks about a 'Shivling' found in the Gyanvapi mosque complex. Petitioner advocate Harishankar Pandey argued that Yadav and Owaisi, along with the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee and approximately 2000 unidentified persons, had repeatedly referred to the 'Shivling' as a fountain causing "significant offense to Hindu sentiments." Pandey sought an FIR against them for the same in his petition. The matter was heard on Tuesday but we received the order of the copy on Wednesday," Pandey said. *—PTI*

Fresh firing in Manipur's Jiribam district, none hurt

IMPHAL, 18 SEPT

Suspected militants launched a fresh attack at Mongbung Meitei village in Manipur's Jiribam district, police said on Wednesday. Militants fired several rounds from sophisticated weapons around 7 pm on Tuesday evening prompting retaliation from village volunteers in the area, the police said. However, no one was injured in the exchange of fire, they said. Security forces were rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control and firing stopped around 8pm, an officer said. Authorities have urged villagers to cooperate with forces while conducting operations. In the last couple of days, villagers have seen multiple drones flying above Mongbung Meitei village, a police officer said. *—PTI*

Jarange gives govt 4 days to act on quota row

JALNA, 18 SEPT

Maratha leader Manoj Jarange on Wednesday gave a four-day ultimatum to the Maharashtra government to fulfill his demands even as OBC activists launched their own hunger strike to counter his agitation. Jarange on Tuesday launched a fresh indefinite fast, sixth in a span of over a year, to press the demand of reservations for the Marathas under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Speaking at his Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district, he said the community will not forgive the Shiv Sena-BJP-NCP government in the state if its demands were not met. Meanwhile, a group of five OBC protesters, led by Mangesh Sasane, started an indefinite hunger strike at nearby Sonianagar. *—PTI*

Congress protests over collapse of law & order in UP

LUCKNOW, 18 SEPT

Uttar Pradesh Congress workers on Wednesday staged sit-in protests and handed over a memorandum to the President through the administration alleging the "collapse" of law and order in the State. The party workers led by Congress State president Ajayt Rai, and State in-charge Avinash Pande reached the Shahid Smarak to stage protests. They handed over a memorandum to the President through the Divisional Commissioner, a statement said. Rai said that the law and order has collapsed and the incident of rapes and other crimes have increased. "Today, we are out on the streets raising voices against the failed law and order," he said. AICC Secretary cum UP in-charge, Dheeraj Gurjar said Congress people will take to streets with the tricolour and the Constitution in our hands to get justice. *—PTI*

Impractical: Oppn rubbishes '1 nation, 1 election' plan

Opposition says BJP is diverting attention from real issues

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

As the Union Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Ram Nath Kovind panel on "one nation, one election" on Wednesday, opposition parties called the proposed move impractical and a "cheap stunt" by the ruling BJP.

The Union Cabinet accepted the high-level panel's recommendations for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced.

Mallikarjun Kharge, President of the main Opposition party Congress, said the proposal is not practical and alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) comes up with such things to divert attention from real issues when polls approach.

"It is not practical, it will not work. When elections come and they (BJP) do not get any issue to raise, they divert attention from real issues," Kharge told a press conference here.

Union Cabinet accepted the proposal to hold simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner *PHOTO: PTI*

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Derek O'Brien called it a "cheap stunt" of BJP and questioned why the Maharashtra polls were not announced with those in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir if the government wants simultaneous elections.

Communist Party of India (CPI) General Secretary D Raja said the proposed move would curtail the rights of the states.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asadudin Owaisi said the proposed move will destroy federalism. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Sandeep Pathak wondered how all elections would be held together when the Maharashtra polls could not be held with those in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir.

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MP Mahua Maji alleged that the BJP is pushing for simultaneous polls as it wants to be the only party to rule in India. Meanwhile, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati voiced support to the move.

"Our party's stand is positive on the approval given today by the Union Cabinet to the proposal to hold simultaneous elections of Lok Sabha, Assembly and local bodies in the country under the system of 'One Country, One Election', but its objective should be in the interest of the country and the public," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a post on X. The high-level committee headed by Kovind has recommended simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies as the first step, followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days. *—PTI*

PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti addresses media after casting her vote on Wednesday *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

PDP alleges police assault at polling stn

KISHTWAR, 18 SEPT

People's Democratic Party (PDP) Kishtwar candidate in Jammu and Kashmir Firdous Ahmad Tak on Wednesday accused police of assaulting him after he objected to his BJP counterpart Shagun Parihar's alleged attempt to check the identity cards of women voters at a polling station here.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar Pawan Kotwal said the voting remained unaffected. Tak said, "I came to know that the BJP candidate had come to the polling station and is intimidating the female voters by checking their identity cards. This is presumed as an attempt by the party to hamper voting. I reached there and asked her that you are like my sister and daughter as I consider your father as my elder brother and if you have any objection, inform the presiding officer," "However she refused and in the meantime BJP workers tried to disrupt voting," he added. *—PTI*

Kashmiri Pandits vote in the hope of returning to valley

JAMMU, 18 SEPT

Living in exile away from their homeland of Kashmir for the past 36 years, displaced Kashmiri Pandits on Wednesday voted with a collective demand to establish a 'homeland' in the valley.

They also sought resettlement that ensures continuity for the younger generation with their roots through this initiative. The community members termed the government's proposal to provide jobs and official quarters in Kashmir to 5,000 Kashmiri migrant youths, including Muslims and Sikhs, as merely symbolic. They argue that this gesture undermines rehabilitation needs of the 300,000-strong community. *—PTI*

BJP suspends 3 senior leaders

Three senior BJP leaders were suspended on Wednesday for contesting Assembly elections against the party's official candidates in Jammu and Kashmir. J&K BJP Vice President Pawan Khajuria along with senior party leaders, Balwan Singh and Narinder Singh Bhau, were suspended on the recommendation of a disciplinary committee. BJP ordered the suspension for an "act of indiscipline" in contesting elections against the official candidates.

Cops delayed seizing belongings of RG Kar accused, says CBI

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Police delayed seizing the clothes of Sanjay Roy, an accused in the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College, for two days though his role had been established on 10 August, a day after the crime, CBI officials said on Wednesday.

Roy, a police volunteer, was arrested based on CCTV footage showing him entering the seminar hall of the college at 4.03am on the day of the incident.

His role in the "commission of crime had already emerged" but Tala Police caused an "unnecessary delay of two days" in seizing his clothes and other belongings. It could have resulted in strong evidence against him, the officials said.

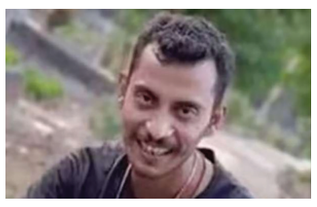


PHOTO: PTI

The central probe agency, which took over the case on 14 August following an order from the Calcutta High Court, has arrested former principal Sandip Ghosh and Tala Police station officer in-charge Abhijit Mondal in connection with the case. Both were found to be evasive in their responses, the officials alleged.

The officials also accused the two of "malafide intention" and said they initiated the investigation with an attempt to "vitiate the evidence" and "vital data related to this case."

Meanwhile, Senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee urged junior doctors to end their agitation, since most of their demands were accepted by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

In connection the financial irregularities at the RG Kar hospita, the Enforcement Directorate has seized several documents during the nearly 20-hour-long search operation at the residences and nursing home of TMC MLA Sudipto Roy. *—PTI*

Veteran YSRCP leader Srinivasa Reddy quits party

AMARAVATI, 18 SEPT

In yet another setback to YSRCP party in Andhra Pradesh, former minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy and also a relative of former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has resigned from the party. According to the sources, the latter is like to join the Jana Sena party and will meet the party Chief Pawan Kalyan on Thursday.

He sent his resignation letter to the YSRCP president citing personal reasons. It is said the party Chief Jagan has called the five-time MLA for a discussion at Tadepalli and he was offered key posts. Balineni was with YSCRP since its inception and a resignation is a major setback. *—Agencies*

'LIVE LIKE A COMMONER'

Kejri to give up security, vacate CM's home: AAP

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Outgoing Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will give up all government facilities, including security, and move out of his official residence in 15 days to live like a commoner, AAP said on Wednesday, a day after he tendered his resignation.

The first thing Kejriwal talked about after submitting his resignation was his decision to leave the official residence of the Delhi chief minister, senior party leader and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said at a press conference here.

While Singh had said that Kejriwal would vacate the 6, Flagstaff Road bungalow in a week, AAP later clarified that the outgoing chief minister and his family would do so in 15 days.

A search is on for suitable accommodation for Arvind Kejriwal and his family, Singh had said.

Singh said Kejriwal would give up all the facilities provided to him as the Delhi chief minister, including the official residence, vehicles and security, and live like a "common man".

PHOTO: PTI

- Kejriwal used to travel in an old blue Wagon R car even when he became the Delhi chief minister for the first time in 2013

Kejriwal used to travel in an old blue Wagon R car even when he became the Delhi chief minister for the first time in 2013.

The AAP leader said there are concerns about Arvind Kejriwal's security as well and he was "attacked several times" in the past. He said BJP has been levelling "false allegations" of corruption against Kejriwal to defame him. *—PTI*

Threats to RaGa: Cong files case against NDA leaders

The complaint was filed by Congress Treasurer Ajay Maken to the SHO of the Tughlaq Road police station in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The Congress on Wednesday filed a police complaint over the recent statements of leaders belonging to the ruling NDA targeting Rahul Gandhi, alleging that they were aimed at jeopardising his security and disturbing peace in view of the polls in Jammu and Kashmir, and Haryana.

In the complaint submitted to the SHO of the Tughlaq Road police station by AICC treasurer and General Secretary Ajay Maken, the Congress cited the recent remarks by BJP leaders Tarvinder Singh Marwah, Ravneet Singh Bittu and Raghuraj Singh, as well as that of Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad.

In the complaint, Maken said, "On 11 September, Marwah in an event issued assassination threat against Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, wherein he said that Gandhi baaz aaja, nahi toh aane wale time mein tera bhi wohi haal hoga jo teri dadi ka haal hua (you better behave, or you will meet the same fate as your grandmother)'". It also cited Sena MLA Gaikwad's announcement of a bounty of Rs 11 lakh for anyone who will cut the tongue of Rahul. The complaint cited Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Bittu's remarks, calling the Leader of Opposition the "number one terrorist of the country". *—PTI*

BJP MP says RaGa's tongue should be singed, booked

AMRAVATI, 18 SEPT

PHOTO: X/@AKHILA_M26

- Congress leaders, including Amravati MP Balwant Wankhede, MLA Yashomati Thakur, staged protest at police commissioner's office

An FIR was registered against BJP's Rajya Sabha member Anil Bonde on the charge of intention to cause riots on Wednesday over his controversial remarks against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, police said.

Bonde has kicked up a row, saying Gandhi's tongue should be singed as his remarks on reservation were "dangerous" and hurt the feelings of the 'bahujan' and majority communities.

Congress leaders, including Amravati MP Balwant Wankhede, MLA Yashomati Thakur, former Minister Sunil Deshmukh and the party workers staged protest at the office of the city police commissioner.

A case was registered under sections 192 (Wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riots), 351 (ii) (the act of intentionally causing another person to apprehend the use of criminal force) and 356 (Punishment for defamation) against MP Anil Bonde.

"The language of chopping off the tongue is not proper, but what Rahul ji said against reservation is dangerous," Bonde said on Tuesday while reacting to remarks made by a Shiv Sena MLA against Gandhi.

"Hence, if anyone speaks anything absurd in a foreign country, then rather than chopping off his tongue, it should be singed. It is necessary to certainly singe the tongues of such people - be it Rahul Gandhi, Dnyanesh Maharao or Shyam Manav and people who hurt the feelings of the 'bahujan' and majority," Bonde said. *—PTI*

CM will decide, Udhayanidhi on DyCM post

CHENNAI, 18 SEPT

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin will take a decision on elevating him as Deputy Chief Minister, ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) Youth Wing Secretary and Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said here on Wednesday.

When journalists told the Minister that party workers had gathered at party headquarters, "Anna Arivalayam," with firecrackers to celebrate, he said he could not visit the head office on Wednesday as he had gone to Anna Centenary Library.

Furthermore, he said cadres and party's high-level panel member SS Palanimanickam (at the party's 75th founding anniversary on Tuesday) have expressed their wish that he be designated Deputy Chief Minister. All ministers will always assist the Chief Minister and "this is (giving him the post), out-and-out, the decision of the MK Stalin, his prerogative."

PHOTO: PTI

- There has been a speculation that Udhayanidhi, Stalin's son, would soon be made Deputy Chief Minister by DMK

To another question related on the post, he asserted, "we will talk about that provided there is an announcement."

Days ago, Chief Minister hinted at a cabinet reshuffle and had said that 'what is expected will happen.' For long, there has been a speculation that Udhayanidhi, Stalin's son, would soon be made Deputy Chief Minister by the ruling party.

On actor Vijay, who has recently formed a political party (Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam) paying floral tributes, for the first time, to reformist leader Periyar EV Ramasamy on his birth anniversary on Tuesday, Udhayanidhi said no one could do politics in the State without following the iconic leader's principles. *—PTI*

POLITICAL SLUGFEST

Sena(UBT) blames Cong for delay in seat-sharing talks for M'rashtra polls

MUMBAI, 18 SEPT

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday blamed Congress leaders in Maharashtra for the delay in Maha Vikas Aghadi's seat-sharing talks for the upcoming Assembly elections.

Talking to reporters, he said the Opposition alliance comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP (SP), along with some regional players, will sit together in Mumbai on Wednesday to iron out issues related to seat-sharing.

Assembly elections are likely to be held in November.

Sanjay Raut *PHOTO: PTI*

"Congress is very busy these days, but still we have called them to put an end to it (talks). We have invited Congress leaders. They are so busy that every day there is 'tarikh pe tarikh' (date after date). So we decided that we will sit together for the next three days," Raut said.

Raut on Tuesday said the leaders from Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) will hold seat-sharing talks from Wednesday to Friday.

He said the talks on Mumbai have more or less been finalised but there was a need to hold region-wise discussion as Maharashtra is a vast State.

In the 2019 undivided Shiv Sena had contested 124 seats in NDA, leaving 163 seats for BJP and other allies. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

CAF jawan shoots 2 colleagues dead in Chhattisgarh

BALRAMPUR, 18 SEPT

Two personnel of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) were killed and as many others injured after their colleague opened fire at them in their camp in State's Balrampur district on Wednesday, a senior official said. The incident took place at around 11 am in the camp of the 'B' company of CAF's 11th battalion in Bhutahi Mod area under Samri Path police station limits, located nearly 400 km from the state capital Raipur, Inspector General of Police (Surguja range) Ankit Garg said. While a constable, Rupesh Patel, died on the spot, another constable, Sandip Pandey, succumbed to injuries while being taken to the hospital, he said. Two other injured personnel - Ambuj Shukla and Rahul Baghel - were admitted to a community health centre in Kusmi. *—PTI*

2 held for forcing woman for nude ritual in Kerala

KOZHIKODE, 18 SEPT

Two people have been arrested by the police in Kerala for allegedly compelling a woman to participate in a nude ritual after attempting to mislead her. Prakasan, 46, and the woman's husband were arrested by the police in Thamarassery in this north Kerala district, based on her complaint. The woman alleged in her complaint that Prakasan had told her that an evil spirit residing in her husband's body was causing problems in their marriage, and that performing a nude ritual on her would resolve all issues. Sensing Prakasan's and her husband's intentions, who is allegedly abusive in nature, she lodged a complaint with the police. The accused were arrested on Tuesday. *—PTI*

HC bans filming in Nadapanthal of Kerala temple

KOCHI, 18 SEPT

In a significant ruling, the Kerala High Court has prohibited vloggers and individuals from filming inside the Nadapanthal of the renowned Lord Krishna temple, Guruvayur. Nadapanthal is a huge temporary structure erected in front of the temple to provide shelter from heat and rains for devotees. A bench comprising Justices Anil K Narendran and PG Ajithkumar issued the order on 13 September in response to a petition filed by two devotees. The petitioners alleged that a female painter had celebrated her birthday by cutting a cake in the Nadapanthal on 15 June and recorded the event. The bench said the videography through the eastern 'Deepastambham' cannot be permitted. *—PTI*

Girl's body found in bushes, kin allege rape

NABARANGPUR, 18 SEPT

The body of a minor tribal girl allegedly raped and murdered was found in Odisha's Nabarangpur district, police said on Wednesday. The body of the girl, a student of class 5 was found near a bush at Kantagaon village on Tuesday evening, the police said. Though the incident came to light on Tuesday evening, the agitated villagers prevented the police from lifting the body from the bush demanding the arrest of the culprits involved in the heinous crime. Family members of the girl said she went missing on Tuesday afternoon. She might have gone near the bush to attend nature's call where she was allegedly raped and killed, the family members alleged. A towel was found stuffed inside the mouth of the deceased the police said. The police along with the scientific team visited the spot and started an investigation. *—PTI*

Loudspeakers harmful during both Ganesha and Eid: HC

HC urges for uniform noise regulation for all religious festivals

MUMBAI, 18 SEPT

The Bombay High Court said on Wednesday that if the use of loudspeakers and sound systems beyond permissible noise levels was harmful during the Ganesh festival then it also has the same effect during the Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi procession.

A division bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar made the remark while hearing a bunch of public interest litigations (PILs) seeking a ban on the use of "DJs", "dance" and "laser lights" during the Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi processions.

The petitions urged the High Court to direct the civic bodies and police to refrain from granting permission for the use of such high-decibel sound systems.

The PILs claimed that neither the Quran nor the Hadith (holy books) prescribes the use of DJ systems and laser lights for the celebration.

Petitions urged to direct the civic bodies to refrain from granting permission for the use of such high-decibel sound systems PHOTO: PTI

The bench referred to an order passed by it last month just before the Ganesh festival wherein it emphasised the ban on the use of sound systems and loudspeakers emitting noise levels beyond the permissible limits specified under the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, during festivals.

The petitioners' advocate Owais Pechkar sought the court to add Eid too in its earlier order to which the bench said that was not required as the order said "public festivals".

"If it is harmful for Ganesh Chaturthi, it is harmful for Eid also," the court said disposing of the petitions.

On the use of laser lights, the bench asked the petitioners to show scientific evidence regarding the harmful effects of such lights on humans. The bench said before such petitions are filed, proper research should be done.

"Why didn't you do your research? How do we adjudicate such an issue unless it is proved scientifically that it causes harm to humans?" the bench said.

It added that the petitioners must help courts give effective directions.

"That's the problem. Before filing a PIL, you must do basic research. You should assist the court in giving effective direction. We are not experts. We do not know the 'L' of laser," the bench added. *—PTI*

TO CURB SMUGGLING OF ARMS

Govt to spend ₹31Kcr to fence 1,643km Myanmar border

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The entire 1,643km porous India-Myanmar border, known for the smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics, will be fenced at a cost of Rs 31,000 crore, sources said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said fencing work had been completed in 30km of the border, which he termed the root cause of the ethnic violence in Manipur.

The Cabinet Committee on Security has, in principle, approved the construction of border fencing and roads along the 1,643-km international border between India and Myanmar at an approximate cost of Rs 31,000 crore, sources said.

About 10km of fencing has already been completed near Moreh and work is underway to fence another 21km of the border in other areas of Manipur. The Central government has already scrapped the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime which allows people residing close to the border to venture 16 km into each other's territory.It was implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy.

PHOTO: PTI

Two battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) have already been deployed in Manipur. In addition, around 200 companies (about 100 personnel in one company) of central police forces were deployed in the restive states. *—PTI*

C'garh court issues notice to Kangana over 'Emergency'

CHANDIGARH, 18 SEPT

A court here has issued notices to BJP MP and actress Kangana Ranaut and others on a complaint accusing them of maligning the image of Sikhs in her upcoming movie 'Emergency'.

The notices were issued by the Chandigarh district court on Tuesday on a plea filed by advocate Ravinder Singh Bassi, who is also the president of the NGO Lawyers for Humanity.

The respondents have been asked to file their replies by 5 December.

Bassi in his petition alleged that Ranaut and other respondents have in the movie 'Emergency' tried to "malign the image of Sikhs" and particularly "targeted" the former Jathedar of the Akal Takth by portraying him as a "terrorist".

PHOTO: PTI

"The accused without studying the proper historical facts and figures had portrayed Sikhs in bad shape and also made wrong and false allegations against the supreme temporal seat of the Sikh community as in the trailer of the movie it was shown that the sitting Jathedar of Sri Akal Takth Sahib was demanding separate state which is totally false and it was shown just to malign the image of Sikhs and the Akal Takth Jathedars," Bassi alleged in the plea.

He also alleged that "the actress, producer and director of the film 'Emergency', whose trailer has been released on the social media platform is a trouble creator and many times, created differences between communities by uttering provoking statements and speeches against the minorities". *—PTI*

BRIBE OF RS 20

9-year-old raped in front of sister in Maharashtra

NAGPUR, 18 SEPT

A 9-year-old girl was allegedly raped in Maharashtra's Pardi on Sunday. The accused, who is yet to be identified, committed the crime in the presence of victim's five-year-old sister. The accused offered the sister Rs 20 to keep mum. The incident happened at around 4 pm when the two sisters were alone at their home as their parents — both daily wagers — were away at work.

The incident came to light after the survivor narrated her ordeal to her parents when they returned from work. The parents rushed to Pardi police station where the cops sent her for medical examination. The examination confirmed rape, and the minor had blood stains on her undergarments.

According to police sources, the suspect is a Marathi-speaking man with a 'tilak' on forehead who was reportedly aware that the girls stayed alone during the day. They suspect that the man is someone familiar with the family.

The accused, who entered the sisters' rented home on the pretext of asking whether the parents were at home, hurriedly left after she raised an alarm to foil his initial attempts to sexually violate her. *—Agencies*

SC to hear on freebies by parties during elections

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Describing the issue of politi cal parties promising freebies during elections as "very important", the Supreme Court on Wednesday said it will not delete from its list of businesses pleas filed against the practice. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra was told by lawyer and PIL petitioner Ashwini Upadhyay that the pleas were already there in the list of business for the day and they needed to be heard.

As the bench was seized of another part-heard matter, it was unlikely the PILs on freebies will be taken up during the day, he said. Lawyer also urged that the pleas be kept on board so they can be heard at a later date. *—PTI*

Jani faces probe by Telugu film body in rape case

HYDERABAD, 18 SEPT

A panel formed by the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce has launched a probe into allegations of sexual harassment made against choreographer Shaik Jani, also known as Jani Master. The allegations were brought forth by a woman who worked with him.

According to Tammareddy Bharadwaj, a member of the committee, the panel will have to submit a report on the whole issue within 90 days from the date of receiving the complaint from the victim.

The Hyderabad police have registered a case against Jani Master after the woman alleged sexual assault by the accused during outdoor shoots and also attacked her at home.

The Raidurgam police registered a zero FIR based on her complaint and transferred it to the Narsingi police station.

Damodar Prasad, head of the sexual harassment redressal panel constituted by the Film Chamber, said a communication was sent to Telugu Film and TV Dancers and Dance Directors Association not to allow Jani Master to discharge duties as its president until all the charges against him are cleared. Prasad further said the committee is also looking into the issue of recruiting a minor by the accused as his assistant. The victim was said to be a minor when she was taken by Jani Master into his group. Meanwhile, the incident assumed political colour with Telangana BJP Mahila Morcha issuing a statement saying the party considers it as a "Love Jihad" case. Jani Master is a member of the Janasena Party.

PHOTO: PTI

- The Party led by Pawan Kalyan had said in a statement that Jani Master had been asked to stay away from the party's programmes

The Party led by Pawan Kalyan had said in a statement that Jani Master had been asked to stay away from the party's programmes. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@MRINVICIBLE

PELLISSERY TO STAY OUT OF NEW FILM ASSOCIATION

T'PURAM, 18 SEPT

In a setback to a group of film personalities seeking to establish a new film organisation amid a scandal-rocked movie industry in Kerala, director Lijo Jose Pellissery clarified on Wednesday that he is not currently part of the collective initiated by director Aashiq Abu.

The clarification came a day after media reports stated that Pellissery was involved in the new film body which aims to revitalise the sector and promote a fair and just workplace, according to its initiators.

"I am not currently part of the film collective being publicised in the media," Pellissery wrote on his Facebook page.

He said that Abu had shared the idea of such a collective with him. *—PTI*

Faster immigration clearance to be launched at 7 more airports

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

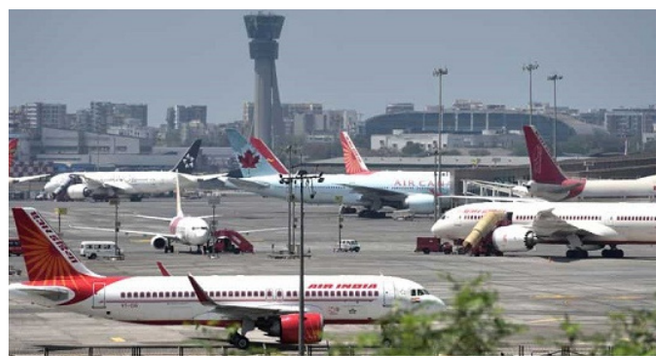
A special programme to fast-track the immigration process for pre-verified Indian nationals and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders will soon be rolled out in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and four other major airports in the country, officials said on Wednesday.

The Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) was first launched at Delhi's IGI Airport on 22 June. So far, 18,400 people (Indians and OCI card holders) have registered themselves for the service.

Work is in progress to start the FTI-TTP in seven more major airports -- Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin and Ahmedabad -- the official said, listing the initiatives taken by the Union home ministry in the first 100 days of the Modi 3.0 government.

The programme ensures faster immigration clearance and so far, 1,500 passengers have been granted the clearance through e-gates in Delhi.

The officials said that the FTI-TTP aims to facilitate international mobility with faster, smoother, and more secure immigration clearance.



The FTI-TTP will eventually be launched at 21 major airports PHOTO: X

In the initial phase, it has been started for Indian nationals and OCI card holders on a gratis basis, they said.

The FTI-TTP is similar to the Global Entry Program offered by the United States that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travellers upon arrival in America at select airports, another official said.

The FTI-TTP will eventually be launched at 21 major airports in the country.

It is designed for faster, smoother and safer immigration clearance for international travellers. Eligible passengers will be allowed to utilise e-gates and bypass regular immigration queues for a seamless journey.

Eligible individuals will need to apply online and submit their biometrics (fingerprint and facial image) along with other required information as specified in the application form. The FTI registration will be valid for a maximum of five years or until the validity of the passport, whichever comes first. A traveller can avail of the facility by applying through the government website www.ftittp.mha.gov.in and providing the required details, which will be verified by the Bureau of Immigration. *—PTI*

RECORD HEAT

June-Aug 2nd-hottest quarter since 1970: Report

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

India experienced its second-hottest quarter from June to August this year since 1970, with over one-third of the country's population enduring at least seven days of dangerous heat, according to a new report by a US-based group of climate scientists and communicators.

The report from Climate Central said climate change made high temperatures over three times more likely on 29 days during these three months.

More than 20.5 million people endured high temperatures heavily influenced by climate change for at least 60 days, it said.

More than 426 million people (about one-third of India's population) faced at least seven days of dangerous heat, with temperatures exceeding 90 per cent of the usual highs for their areas from 1991 to 2020, the scientists said.

More than 426 million people faced at least seven days of dangerous heat PHOTO: PTI

Globally, over 2 billion people (25 per cent of the global population) experienced 30 or more days of extreme heat, made at least three times more likely by climate change.

Several cities in India saw many days where temperatures were heavily influenced by climate change. Cities like Thiruvananthapuram, Vasai-Virar, Kavaratti, Thane, Mumbai, and Port Blair were the most affected, with each experiencing over 70 days of temperatures made at least three times more likely due to climate change.

Mumbai recorded 54 days of extreme heat caused by climate change. Meanwhile, Kanpur and Delhi experienced long periods of dangerously high temperatures, with average temperatures above 39 degrees Celsius, made four times more likely by climate change, the report added. *—PTI*

EY under fire after work pressure kills woman

PUNE, 18 SEPT

Anna Sebastian Perayil, a 26-year-old Chartered Accountant from Kerala, lost her life due to what her family describes as extreme work stress, just four months after joining EY Pune, one of the Big Four accounting firms. Anna, who passed her CA exams in 2023, began working as an executive at EY in March. It was her first job, and she worked tirelessly to meet the demands placed on her. However, this relentless effort severely affected her mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

In the wake of her passing, Anna's mother, Anita Augustine, sent a poignant email to Rajiv Memani, the India head of EY, criticising the firm for "glorifying overwork." She highlighted the stark contrast between the company's stated human rights values and the reality her daughter faced. According to her, the overwhelming workload caused Anna to experience anxiety, sleeplessness, and stress soon after joining, but Anna continued to push herself, believing that hard work and perseverance were key to success.

Anita also noted that many of Anna's colleagues had resigned due to the excessive workload. Despite this, Anna's boss urged her to "stick around and change everyone's opinion about the team." She emphasised, "It's time to reflect on work culture within your organization and take meaningful steps to prioritize the health and well-being of your employees." *—Agencies*

FULL HARVEST SUPERMOON

A supermoon rises behind a horse statue atop of Triumphal Arc during a partial lunar eclipse in Moscow, Russia, on Wednesday. A supermoon is a full moon or a new moon that nearly coincides with perigee, the closest that the Moon comes to the Earth in its elliptic orbit
PHOTO: PTI

Why was Israel blamed for Hezbollah pager blast?

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government were quick to blame Israel for the nearly simultaneous detonation of hundreds of pagers used by the militant group's members in an attack Tuesday that killed at least nine people and wounded nearly 3,000 others, according to officials.

Many of those hit were members of militant group Hezbollah, but it wasn't immediately clear if others also carried the pagers. Among those killed were the son of a prominent Hezbollah politician and an 8-year-old girl, according to Lebanon's health minister.

The attack came amid rising tensions between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, which have exchanged fire across the Israel-Lebanon border since last year's 7 October attack by Hamas that sparked the war in Gaza.

Israel rarely takes responsibility for such attacks, and its military declined to comment Tuesday. However, the country has a long history of carrying out sophisticated remote operations, ranging from intricate cyberattacks to remote-controlled machine guns targeting leaders in drive-by shootings, suicide drone attacks, and the detonation of explosions in secretive underground Iranian nuclear facilities.

Here is a look at previous operations that have been attributed to Israel:

Two major militant leaders in Beirut and Tehran were killed in deadly strikes within hours of each other. Hamas said Israel was behind the assassination of its supreme leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Iran's capital. Although Israel didn't acknowledge playing a role in that attack, it did claim responsibility for a deadly strike hours earlier on Fouad Shukur, a top Hezbollah commander in Beirut.

Israel targeted Hamas' shadowy military commander, Mohammed Deif, in a massive strike in the crowded southern Gaza Strip. The strike killed at least 90 people, including children, according to local health officials. The Israeli military said in August that Deif was killed in the attack, though Hamas previously claimed he survived.

Ambulance carries wounded people whose handheld pager exploded, in Lebanon, on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Two Iranian generals were killed in what Iran said was an Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria. The deaths led Iran to launch an unprecedented attack on Israel that involved about 300 missiles and drones, most of which were intercepted.

An Israeli drone strike in Beirut killed Saleh Arouri, a top Hamas official in exile, as Israeli troops fight the militant group in Gaza.

Seyed Razi Mousavi, a longtime adviser of the Iranian paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in Syria, was killed in a drone attack outside of Damascus. Iran blamed Israel.

An underground nuclear facility in central Iran was hit with explosions and a devastating cyberattack that caused rolling blackouts. Iran accused Israel of carrying out the attack as well as several others against Iranian nuclear facilities using explosive drones in the ensuing years.

In one of the most prominent assassinations targeting Iran's nuclear programme, a top Iranian military nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was killed by a remote-controlled machine gun while travelling in a car outside Tehran.

An Israeli airstrike hit the home of Bahaa Abu el-Atta, a senior Islamic Jihad commander in the Gaza Strip, killing him and his wife.

Ahmad Jabari, head of Hamas' armed wing, was killed when an airstrike targeted his car. His death sparked an eight-day war between Hamas and Israel.

The Stuxnet computer virus, discovered in 2010, disrupted and destroyed Iranian nuclear centrifuges. It was widely believed to be a joint US-Israeli creation.

Hamas' spiritual leader, Ahmed Yassin, was killed in an Israeli helicopter strike while being pushed in his wheelchair. Yassin, who was paralysed in a childhood accident, was among the founders of Hamas in 1987. His successor, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, was killed in an Israeli airstrike less than a month later.

Hamas's second-highest military leader, Salah Shehadeh, was killed by a one-ton bomb dropped on an apartment building in Gaza City.

Mossad agents tried to kill the head of Hamas at the time, Khaled Mashaal, in Amman, Jordan. Two agents entered Jordan using fake Canadian passports and poison Mashaal by placing a device near his ear. They were captured shortly afterward and Jordan's king threatened to void a still-fresh peace accord if Mashaal died. Israel ultimately dispatched an antidote, and the Israeli agents were returned home. Mashaal remains a senior figure in Hamas.

Palestine Liberation Organization military chief Khalil al-Wazir was killed in Tunisia. Better known as Abu Jihad, he had been PLO chief Yasser Arafat's deputy. In 2012, military censors allowed an Israeli paper to reveal details of the Israeli raid for the first time.

Israeli commandos shot a number of PLO leaders in their apartments in Beirut, in a nighttime raid led by Ehud Barak, who later became Israel's top army commander and prime minister. The operation was part of a string of Israeli assassinations of Palestinian leaders that were carried out in retaliation for the killings of 11 Israeli coaches and athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

'Antibiotic resistance will claim 39M lives in 25 years'

Over a million people around the world died annually due to antibiotic resistance between 1990 and 2021, and more than 39 million could die from antibiotic-resistant infections over the next 25 years, according to a global analysis, published in The Lancet journal.

Future deaths from antibiotic resistance are estimated to be highest in South Asia -- including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh -- where a total of 11.8 million deaths directly due to it are forecast between 2025 and 2050, a collaboration of researchers forming the Global Research on Antimicrobial Resistance (GRAM) Project said.

Antibiotic, or antimicrobial, resistance is when drugs designed to kill infectious bacteria and fungi are rendered ineffective because the bugs have evolved and developed an ability to defeat these drugs.

The researchers said deaths due to antibiotic resistance will also be high in other parts of southern and eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Further, trends between 1990 and 2021 suggested that among people aged 70 years and above, deaths caused by antibiotic resistance increased by more than 80 per cent, and will continue to affect older people more in the years to come, the authors said.

Over the same period, deaths due to antibiotic resistance among children aged under five years fell by more than 50 per cent, they found.

"The fall in deaths from sepsis (a bloodstream infection) and antibiotic resistance among young children over the past three decades is an incredible achievement. However, these findings show that while infections have become less common in young children, they have become harder to treat when they occur," author Kevin Ikuta, an affiliate professor at the Institute of Health Metrics (IHME), University of Washington, US, one of the collaborators on the GRAM Project, said.

Future deaths from antibiotic resistance are estimated to be highest in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

"Further, the threat to older people from antimicrobial resistance will only increase as populations age. Now is the time to act to protect people around the world from the threat posed by antimicrobial resistance," Ikuta said.

An improved access to health care and antibiotics could save a total of 92 million lives between 2025 and 2050, the authors estimated. The study is the first global analysis of antimicrobial resistance trends over time, they said.

An increasing resistance to antibiotics -- one of the "cornerstones of modern healthcare" -- is a major cause for concern and the findings highlighted the significance of the global health threat, according to author Mohsen Naghavi from the IHME.

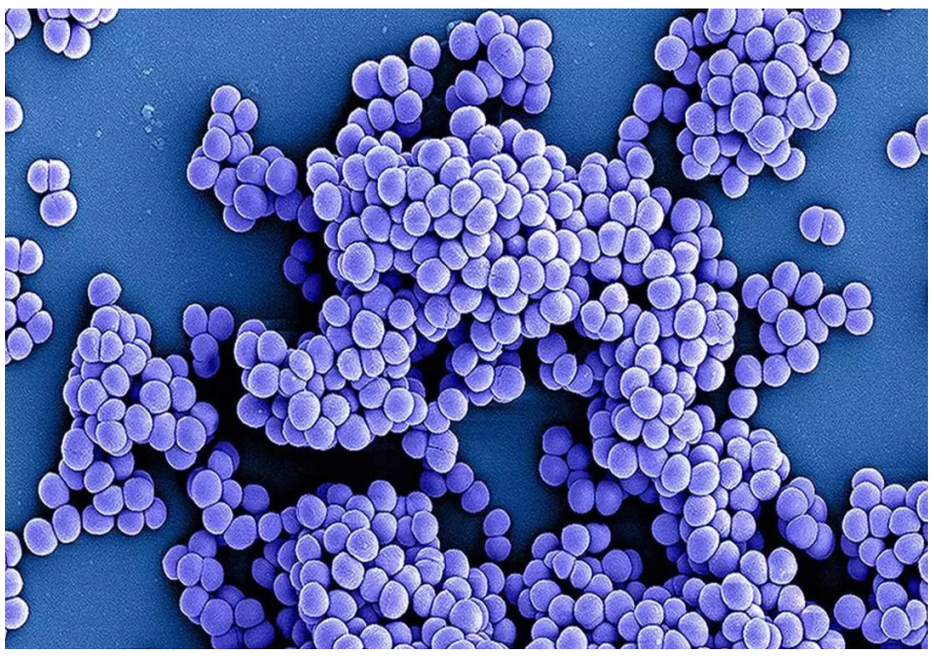
"Understanding how trends in antimicrobial resistance deaths have changed over time, and how they are likely to shift in future, is vital to make informed decisions to help save lives," Naghavi said.

The analysis was based on data from 520 million people of all ages in 204 countries and territories, taken from a wide range of sources, including hospital and death records, and antibiotic use information.

The estimates produced are related to 22 disease-causing microbes (pathogens), 84 pathogen-drug combinations and 11 infectious symptoms such as bloodstream infections, the authors said.

In 2019, deaths related to antibiotic resistance were higher than those from HIV/AIDS or malaria, leading directly to 1.2 million deaths and playing a role in a further nearly five million deaths, according to the first study by the GRAM Project, published in 2022.

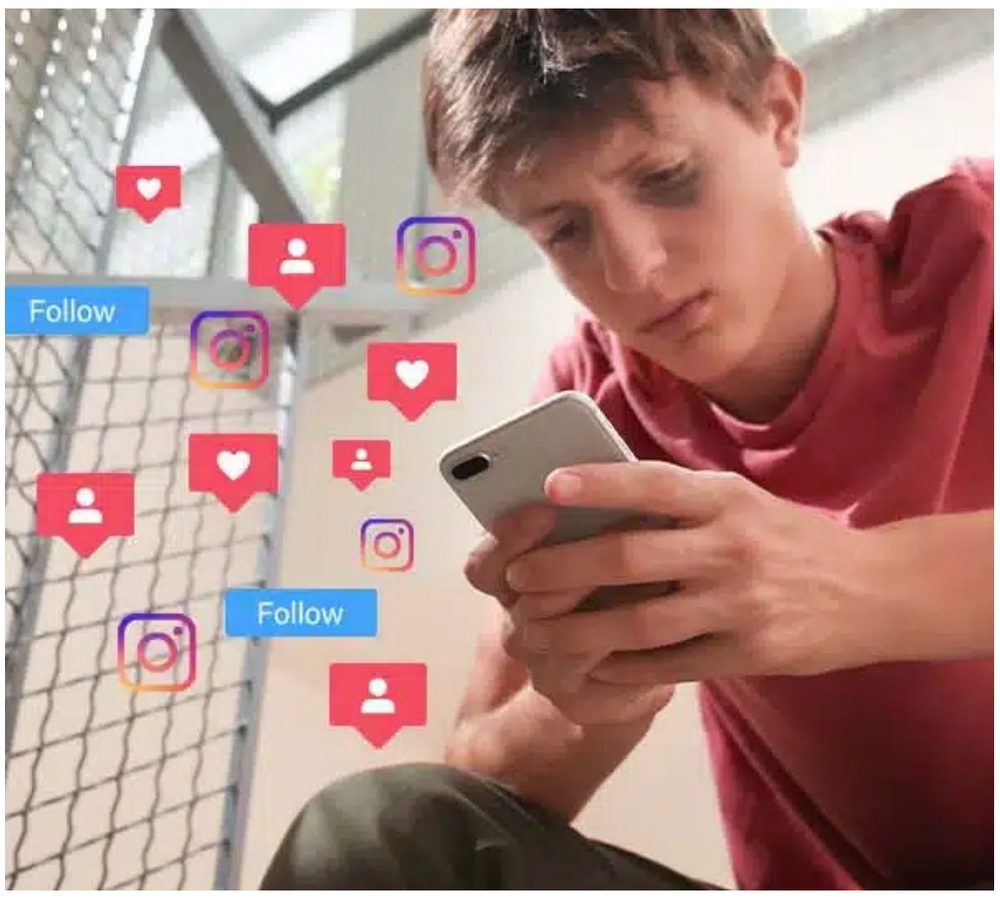
—PTI



The analysis was based on data from 520 million people of all ages in 204 countries and territories, taken from a wide range of sources ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Instagram's new teen accounts to boost online child safety



Meta acknowledges that teenagers may lie about their age and says it will require them to verify their ages in more instances, like if they try to create a new account with an adult birthday ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Instagram is introducing separate teen accounts for those under 18 as it tries to make the platform safer for children amid a growing backlash against how social media affects young people's lives.

Beginning Tuesday in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, anyone under under 18 who signs up for Instagram will be placed into a teen account and those with existing accounts will be migrated over the next 60 days.

Teens in the European Union will see their accounts adjusted later this year.

Meta acknowledges that teenagers may lie about their age and says it will require them to verify their ages in more instances, like if they try to create a new account with an adult birthday.

The Menlo Park, California company also said it is building technology that proactively finds teen accounts that pretend to be grownups and automatically places them into the restricted teen accounts.

The teen accounts will be private by default.

Private messages are restricted so teens can only receive them from people they follow or are already connected to.

"Sensitive content," such as videos of people fighting or those promoting cosmetic procedures, will be limited, Meta said. Teens will also get notifications if they are on Instagram for more than 60 minutes and a "sleep mode" will be enabled that turns off notifications and sends auto-replies to direct messages from 10 pm until 7 am.

While these settings will be turned on for all teens, 16 and 17-year-olds will be able to turn them off. Kids under 16 will need their parents' permission to do so.

"The three concerns we're hearing from parents are that their teens are seeing content that they don't want to see or that they're getting contacted by people they don't want to be contacted by or that they're spending too much on the app," said Naomi Gleit, head of product at Meta. "So teen accounts is really focused on addressing those three concerns."

The announcement comes as the company faces lawsuits from dozens of US states that accuse it of harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by knowingly and deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms.

In the past, Meta's efforts at addressing teen safety and mental health on its platforms have been met with criticism that the changes don't go far enough. For instance, while kids will get a notification when they've spent 60 minutes on the app, they will be able to bypass it and continue scrolling.

- With the latest changes, Meta is giving parents more options to oversee their kids' accounts. Those under 16 will need a parent or guardian's permission to change their settings to less restrictive ones

That's unless the child's parents turn on "parental supervision" mode, where parents can limit teens' time on Instagram to a specific amount of time, such as 15 minutes.

With the latest changes, Meta is giving parents more options to oversee their kids' accounts. Those under 16 will need a parent or guardian's permission to change their settings to less restrictive ones.

They can do this by setting up "parental supervision" on their accounts and connecting them to a parent or guardian.

Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, said last week that parents don't use the parental controls the company has introduced in recent years.

Gleit said she thinks teen accounts will create a "big incentive for parents and teens to set up parental supervision."

"Parents will be able to see, via the family center, who is messaging their teen and hopefully have a conversation with their teen," she said. "If there is bullying or harassment happening, parents will have visibility into who their teen's following, who's following their teen, who their teen has messaged in the past seven days and hopefully have some of these conversations and help them navigate these really difficult situations online."

US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said last year that tech companies put too much on parents when it comes to keeping children safe on social media.

"We're asking parents to manage a technology that's rapidly evolving that fundamentally changes how their kids think about themselves, how they build friendships, how they experience the world — and technology, by the way, that prior generations never had to manage," Murthy said. *—PTI*

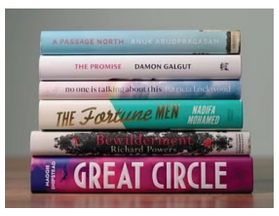


PHOTO:THE BOOKER PRIZES

Women authors dominate Booker Prize 2024 shortlist

LONDON, 18 SEPT

For the first time in the 55-year history of the Booker Prize, the shortlist has a strong feminine flavour with five out of the six authors in the running for the prestigious GBP 50,000 literary award being women. British writer Samantha Harvey has been shortlisted for her space set novel 'Orbital', American Rachel Kushner for spy thriller 'Creation Lake', Canadian Anne Michaels for her familial tale 'Held', Australian Charlotte Wood for her philosophical 'Stone Yard Devotional' and Yael van der Wouden, the first Dutch author to be shortlisted, for her debut novel 'The Safekeep'. American writer Percival Everett is the only male among this year's finalists announced in London this week for his Mark Twain ode 'James'.

"The six books on the shortlist bring a diversity of perspective, style and subject matter, from those that hold the reader close to those that take the reader for a spin. It's a pleasure to bring new authors to the Booker library and welcome back those who have been here before, and I can't wait for even more readers to immerse themselves in the worlds created by all of this year's cohort," said Gaby Wood, Chief Executive of the Booker Prize Foundation. *—PTI*

N Korea test-fires 2 ballistic missiles, says Japan

SEOUL, 18 SEPT

Japan's military said Wednesday it detected North Korea test-firing two ballistic missiles, adding to its military demonstrations as tensions with Washington and neighbours escalate. Launches come days after North Korea offered a rare view into a secretive facility built to enrich uranium for nuclear bombs in a significant show of defiance against the United States and as leader Kim Jong Un called for a rapid expansion of his nuclear weapons program. Japan's Defence Ministry didn't immediately provide more details about the weapons involved in the North's latest test, including what types of missiles they were and how far they flew. *—AP*

Ukraine boxing c'pion released after detention

KRAKOW, 18 SEPT

Heavyweight boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk has been released after being briefly detained at Krakow airport in Poland, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday. "I was disappointed by this attitude towards our citizen and champion," said Zelenskyy after he had a phone conversation with Usyk. "Our champion has been released, and he is no longer being detained." He posted a photo of Usyk with Ukraine's Consul General in Krakow after the athlete was released. It was not immediately clear why the 37-year-old Usyk was detained. *—AP*

China announces sanctions on US companies

BEIJING, 18 SEPT

China on Wednesday announced sanctions on American companies selling arms to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory and threatens to annex by force. Chinese state media made the announcement, citing the Foreign Ministry, but gave no details on the companies involved. Taiwan is awaiting deliveries of F-16 fighter jets, Abrams tanks and a range of missiles from the US. China has been upping its threats to attack Taiwan, whose 2.3M citizens overwhelmingly favour their current status of de-facto independence. Despite their lack of formal diplomatic ties, the US has long been a key provider. *—AP*

Hezbollah vows retaliation after exploding pagers that kill 12

Israel yet to make statement about detonations that injured at least 3,000

TAIPEI, 18 SEPT

Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate against Israel after pagers used by its members exploded across Lebanon simultaneously, killing at least nine people and wounding almost 3,000 in a dramatic and unprecedented attack at a time of heightened tensions in the Middle East.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the blasts, which came just hours after Israel announced it was broadening its aims in the war sparked by the Hamas attacks on 7 October to include its fight against Hezbollah along the border with Lebanon.

Lebanon's health minister, Firass Abiad, said the blasts on Tuesday killed a 10-year-old girl, among others. He told a press conference: "About 2,750 people were injured … more than 200 of them critically," with injuries mostly reported to the face, hands and stomach.

The apparent sabotage attack followed months of targeted assassinations by Israel against senior Hezbollah leaders. It came as US officials try to de-escalate tensions between the two sides and remain concerned that Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, could order a ground invasion of Lebanon. It threatens to derail efforts by the US to prevent Iran, which backs the Lebanese Shia militia, from retaliating against Israel for the July bombing in Tehran that killed the Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.

The blasts appeared to exploit the low-tech pagers that Hezbollah has adopted in order to prevent the targeted assassinations of its members, who could be tracked by mobile phone signals. Those wounded in the attack include Iran's ambassador to Beirut, Mojtaba Amani, according to reports.

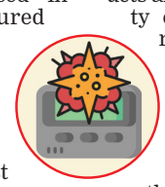
Experts believe explosive material was put into the pagers prior to their delivery. The AR-924 pager, advertised as being "rugged," contains a rechargeable lithium battery, according to specifications advertised on Gold Apollo's website before they were removed after the attack. *—The Guardian/AP*

People queue to donate blood at the hospital after the arrival of several men who were wounded by exploded handheld pagers, in Lebanon **PHOTO: PTI**

Pagers made in Hungary, says Taiwan company

TAIPEI, 18 SEPT

Taiwanese company Gold Apollo said Wednesday that it authorised its brand on the pagers that exploded in Lebanon and Syria but that another company based in Budapest manufactured them.



Pagers used by the militant group Hezbollah exploded near-simultaneously Tuesday in Lebanon and Syria, killing at least nine people, including an 8-year-old girl, and wounding more than 2,000. Hezbollah and the Lebanese government blamed Israel for what appeared to be a sophisticated remote attack. The AR-924 pagers were manufactured by BAC Consulting KFT, based in Hungary's capital, according to a statement released Wednesday by Gold Apollo.

"According to the cooperation agreement, we authorise BAC to use our brand trademark for product sales in designated regions, but the design and manufacturing of the products are solely the responsibility of BAC," the statement read.

Gold Apollo chair Hsu Ching-kuang told journalists Wednesday that his company has had a licensing agreement with BAC for the past three years, but did not provide evidence of the contract. At about 3.30 pm Tuesday, as people shopped for groceries, sat in cafes or drove cars and motorcycles, the pagers in their hands or pockets started heating up and then exploding — leaving blood-splattered scenes and panicking bystanders. *—AP*

Indian charged for pro-Palestinian procession in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 18 SEPT

Three Singaporean women, including one of Indian origin, will be contesting their charges involving a pro-Palestinian procession to the Istana, Singapore's Presidential Palace, their lawyer said on Wednesday during the trial.

The trio was charged in June under the Public Order Act over the organisation of a procession without a permit on February 2, a media report said. Annamalai Kokila Parvathi is accused of abetting the conspiracy by engaging with two other women and other unknown individuals to organise the procession.

Annamalai, 36, has been charged with one count of abetment of organising a public procession in a prohibited area while Siti Amirah Mohamed Asrori, 29, and Mossammad Sobikun Nahar, 25, are accused of organising the procession that took place between 2 pm and 3 pm along the perimeter of the Istana.

The police said in a previous statement that about 70 people assembled along Orchard Road outside a mall at about 2 pm on February 2 and walked towards the Istana. *—PTI*

Ukrainian drones strike large military depot in Moscow

KYIV, 18 SEPT

Ukrainian drones struck a large military depot in a town deep inside Russia overnight, causing a huge blaze and prompting the evacuation of some local residents, a Ukrainian official and Russian news reports said Wednesday.

The strike came as a senior US diplomat said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's recently announced — but still confidential — plan for winning the war "can work" and help end the conflict that is now in its third year. Ukraine claimed the strike destroyed Russian military warehouses in Toropets, a town in Russia's Tver region about 380 kilometers northwest of Moscow and about 500 kilometres from the border with Ukraine.

The attack was carried out by Ukraine's Security Service, along with Ukraine's Intelligence and Special Operations Forces, a Kyiv security official told Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the operation. According to the official, the depot housed Iskander and Tochka-U missiles, as well as glide bombs and artillery shells. He said the facility caught fire in the strike and was burning across an area 6 kilometres wide. AP

Russian state news agency RIA Novosti quoted regional authorities as saying air defence systems were working to repel a "massive drone attack" on Toropets, which has a population of around 11,000. The agency also reported a fire and the evacuation of some local residents.

There was no immediate information about whether the strikes had caused any casualties. Successful Ukrainian strikes on targets deep inside Russia have become more common as the war has progressed and Kyiv developed its drone technology.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk on Wednesday arrived in Islamabad on a two-day visit during which he will hold talks with Pakistan's top leadership and discuss ways to enhance bilateral ties. *—PTI*

Volodymyr Zelenskyy **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump says India 'very big abuser' of trade ties, calls Modi 'fantastic'

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK, 18 SEPT

Ex-US president Donald Trump slammed India as "an abuser" on the issue of import tariffs on Tuesday but at the same time, praised the Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "fantastic man".

The Republican candidate for the US presidential election in November was speaking in Flint, Michigan.

Speaking on Tuesday at his first public appearance following the recent apparent assassination attempt, Trump said Modi will meet him next week when he is in the US. "So when India, which is a very big abuser. He (Modi) happens to be coming to meet me next week, and Modi, he's fantastic. I mean, fantastic man. A lot of these leaders are fantastic," Trump said, reiterating that India imposes heavy tariffs on imports.

The former president revealed the information as he spoke about trade and tariffs while responding to a question at a town hall meeting in Flint, Michigan. He went on to say, "These people are the sharpest people. They're not a little bit backwards...You know the expression, they're at the top of their game, and they use it against us. But India is very tough. Brazil is very tough…. China is the toughest of all, but we were taking care of China with the tariffs."

In New Delhi, when asked about Trump's comment, the Ministry of External Affairs did not respond. Modi will begin his trip with the Quad Leaders' Summit being hosted by President Joe Biden in Wilmington, Delaware. The summit will be attended by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan.

Modi will then travel to New York and address a mega community event in Long Island on September 22. He will address world leaders at the landmark Summit of the Future event at the UN headquarters the next day.

The former president Donald Trump revealed the information as he spoke about trade and tariffs **PHOTO: PTI**

- The former president revealed the information as he spoke about trade and tariffs while responding to a question at a town hall meeting in Flint, Michigan

Secret Service faces scrutiny

For the second time in more than two months, the Secret Service that protects the highest echelon of American leaders is under scrutiny - this time after a gunman hid in the shrubs along the fence of Donald Trump's golf course for 12 hours.

The man didn't get a shot off, but critics question how he could be just several hundred yards away from Trump - especially after the Republican presidential candidate's security was beefed up after his near-death experience in July.

Biden administration officials praised the agency's response, and former Secret Service agents say there are key differences between what unfolded Sunday and the security lapses at an outdoor rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, when a gunman climbed onto an unsecured roof nearby and opened fire, clipping Trump's ear and leaving a spectator dead.

It's long been known to law enforcement that places along the edge of the property leave Trump visible to those behind the fence, and some have questioned why it was not protected. But a sprawling golf course poses specific challenges, especially for a last-minute round, even with Trump's bolstered security, former Secret Service agents say. *—PTI*

EU shows climate breakdown fast becoming the norm

BRUSSELS, 18 SEPT

Devastating floods through much of Central Europe and deadly wildfires in Portugal are joint proof of a "climate breakdown" that will become the norm unless drastic action is taken, the European Union's head office said Wednesday.

"Make no mistake. This tragedy is not an anomaly. This is fast becoming the norm for our shared future," said EU Crisis Management Commissioner Janez Lenarcic. The worst flooding in years moved Tuesday across a broad swath of Central Europe, taking lives and destroying homes. At the other end of the 27-nation EU, raging fires through northern Portugal have killed at last six people.

"Europe is the fastest warming continent globally and is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events like the one we are discussing today. We could not return to a safer past," Lenarcic told EU lawmakers in Strasbourg, France.

He warned that beyond the human cost, nations are also struggling to cope with mounting bills for repairing the damage from emergencies and the lengthy recovery from disaster. Terry Reintke, president of the Greens group in the European Parliament, said the cost for the EU since the 1980s was estimated at $650 billion euros. *—AP*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Portugal declares state of calamity

LISBON, 18 SEPT

More than 100 wildfires stretched thousands of firefighters to the limit in northern Portugal on Wednesday, with seven deaths since the worst spate of fires in recent years spread out of control over the weekend. Portuguese Prime Minister Luís Montenegro declared a state of calamity for the hardest-hit areas late, invoking powers to mobilise more firefighters and civil servants.

B'DESH'S INTERIM GOVT GIVES ARMY MAGISTRATE POWERS

DHAKA, 18 SEPT

Bangladesh's interim government has granted magisterial powers to the Army for two months to improve law and order in the country and prevent "subversive acts".

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification on the government's decision on Tuesday, saying it will be applicable with immediate effect. The powers will be given to commissioned officers of the Army.

Section 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, or CrPC, which awards Army officers the status of special executive magistrates, says these officers shall be subordinate to the district magistrates, or deputy commissioners, bdnews24.com reported. This authority including arrest and dispersal of unlawful rallies has been conferred upon commissioned officers of the Army. *—PTI*

Imran's crimes enough to keep him jailed: Pak minister

ISLAMABAD, 18 SEPT

Imran Khan's crimes alone are enough to keep him behind bars, Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said, as he dismissed the former prime minister's accusation that the government was pushing to amend the constitution to keep him in prison.

Khan, 71, has been in jail since August last year after being convicted in some of the nearly 200 cases slapped on him since his ouster in April 2022. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder on Monday rejected the anticipated constitutional changes, claiming that it was an effort to keep him in prison by controlling the judiciary.

Responding to the allegation, Asif on Tuesday said, "Given PTI founder's long list of crimes, constitutional amendments won't be necessary."

"The incarcerated former premier wants to attach himself not just to constitutional amendments but to everything (that's happening) in Pakistan as he considers himself the centre of everything."

Khan should reflect on what chaos he created in the last four years, he said, adding there was an attempted rebellion against the state. Khan is facing several cases in connection with the 9 May violence in which supporters of his party allegedly attacked military installations. *—PTI*

Imran Khan **PHOTO: PTI**

ASKS INDIANS TO MAKE SWITCH

UK launches major eVisa transition drive

LONDON, 18 SEPT

The UK on Wednesday launched a major drive urging all immigrants across the country, including Indians, who are using a physical immigration document to take immediate action to transition to an eVisa.

As part of plans to fully digitise the UK border and immigration system, all those using a physical biometric residence permit (BRP), a passport containing a visa vignette sticker or ink stamp confirming their "indefinite leave to enter/remain" in the country, or biometric residence card (BRC) as evidence of their immigration rights will be switched over to an entirely online system by next year.

A majority of the BRPs are set to expire towards the end of this year and are being automatically transitioned online in phases to be accessed by creating and logging into a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) online account.

"Everyone with physical immigration documents is urged to take action now to switch to an eVisa, and I want to reassure those who need it that free advice and support is available," said Seema Malhotra, the Indian-origin Minister for Migration.To help with the transition process, during which physical documentation will still be accepted, the Home Office is laying out around GBP 4 million of grant funding from this month to a UK-wide network of voluntary and community sector organisations to provide independent support for "vulnerable customers" unsure about accessing eVisas. *—PTI*

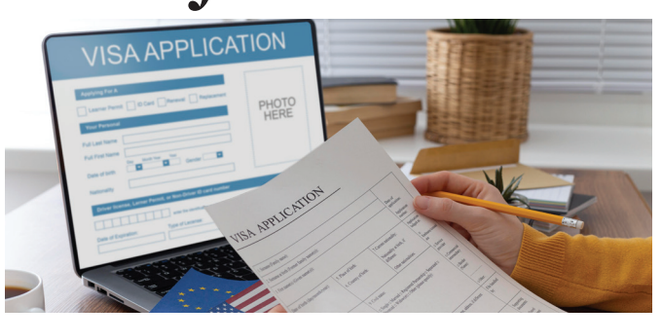


PHOTO: FREEPIK

UK inflation steady at 2.2%

LONDON, 18 SEP

Inflation in the UK held steady at an annual rate of 2.2 per cent in August, with higher air fares offset by lower fuel costs and restaurant and hotel bills, official figures showed Wednesday. The latest reading from the Office of National Statistics means inflation remains just above the Bank of England's target of 2 per cent. *—AP*

Gold jumps ₹170 to ₹73,264 per 10 grams

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Gold prices continued to shine bright by rallying Rs 170 to Rs 73,264 per 10 grams on the MCX on Wednesday amid a bullish trend in the international markets ahead of the US Federal Reserve interest rate decision. In the futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for October delivery was trading higher by Rs 170, or 0.23 per cent, at Rs 73,264 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 73,094 per 10 grams on the exchange in the previous close on Tuesday. However, silver contracts for December delivery declined Rs 116, or 0.13 per cent, to Rs 89,024 per kilogram on Wednesday. In the previous session, the silver metal had finished at Rs 89,140 per kg on Tuesday. Meanwhile, silver prices plunged Rs 800 to Rs 91,300 per kg from the previous close of Rs 92,100 per kilogram. Comex gold is at 0.42 per cent higher. *—PTI*

India takes part in France trade fair to boost tourism

NEW DELHI , 18 SEPT

India is participating in a key tourism trade fair in French capital Paris with the goal of significantly increasing inbound tourism, officials said on Wednesday. The Ministry of Tourism in a statement said it is participating in the prestigious IFTM Top Resa 2024 which is one of the prominent travel exhibitions held in Paris from 17-19 September. An Incredible India Pavillion has been set up at the venue. The pavillion was inaugurated by Ambassador of India to France, Jawed Ashraf, in the presence of officials from the Ministry of Tourism, the state tourism departments of Meghalaya and Jammu and Kashmir. The pavillion also showcases the country's rich yoga practice, which is drawing significant attention from the visitors, it said. In 2023, India received 9.24 million foreign tourists, including 0.18 million from France. *—PTI*

RBI unlikely to cut interest rate in 2024: SBI Chief

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Reserve Bank is unlikely to ease the benchmark policy rate during 2024 given the uncertainty over food inflation, State Bank of India (SBI) chairman CS Setty has said. The US Federal Reserve's first cut in interest rates in more than four years is expected soon, triggering central banks in other economies to follow suit. "On the rate front, a lot of central banks are taking independent calls. While Fed rate cut would influence everyone, RBI would be mindful of the food inflation before taking a call on interest rate cut," Setty, who took over the reins of the bank recently, told PTI in an interview. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das is scheduled to meet during 7-9 October and take a call on interest rate. Retail inflation, which is being taken into consideration by the rate-setting panel MPC for its decision, rose marginally to 3.65 per cent in August, from 3.54 per cent in July. *—PTI*

Market settles lower dragged by IT stocks

Sensex drops 131.43 pts to settle at 82,948.23

MUMBAI, 18 SEPT

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Wednesday, after hitting fresh record high levels during the morning trade, dragged by IT stocks as investors preferred to book profits ahead of the keenly-awaited US Fed's decision on interest rates.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 131.43 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 82,948.23. During the day, it climbed 246.72 points or 0.29 per cent to scale a new all-time intra-day peak of 83,326.38.

The NSE Nifty also declined 41 points or 0.16 per cent to close at 25,377.55. During the day, it advanced 63.65 points or 0.25 per cent to hit a fresh intra-day lifetime high of 25,482.20.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Technologies dropped over 3 per cent each. Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma and Tata Motors were the other major laggards.

Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and State Bank of India were among the biggest gainers.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.63 per cent to USD 72.50 a barrel.

Extending its record-setting spree for the second day on Tuesday, BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 90.88 points or 0.11 per cent to settle at a lifetime high of 83,079.66. Nifty went up by 34.80 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at an all-time peak of 25,418.55 .*—PTI*

Nifty also declined 41 points to close at 25,377.55 ***PHOTO: PTI***

IN BIG WIN

Google wins fight over $1.66B EU antitrust fine in ad case

LONDON, 18 SEPT

Google won a court challenge on Wednesday against a 1.49 billion euro (USD 1.66 billion) European Union antitrust fine imposed five years ago that targeted its online advertising business.

The EU's General Court said it was throwing out the 2019 penalty imposed by the European Commission, which is the 27-nation bloc's top antitrust enforcer.

The commission's ruling applied to a narrow portion of Google's ad business: ads that the US tech giant sold next to Google search results on third-party websites.

Regulators had accused Google of inserting exclusivity clauses in its contracts that barred these websites from running similarly placed ads sold by Google's rivals. The commission said when it issued the penalty that Google's behaviour resulted in advertisers and website owners having less choice and likely facing higher prices that would be passed on to consumers.

But the General Court said the commission "committed errors" when it assessed those clauses. The commission failed to demonstrate that Google's contracts deterred innovation, harmed consumers or helped the company hold on to and strengthen its dominant position in national online search advertising markets, it said.

Google did not respond immediately to a request for comment. The company's legal victory comes a week after it lost a final challenge against a separate EU antitrust case for its shopping comparison service that also involved a hefty fine. *—PTI*

The company's legal victory comes a week after it lost a final challenge against a separate EU antitrust case ***PHOTO: PTI***

Reliance pays ₹3,872 cr to settle Vidarbha plant deal

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Reliance Power has settled Rs 3,872 crore guarantor obligations for its subsidiary Vidarbha Industries Power, the firm said in a filling.

Reliance Power Ltd said, "The entire obligations of the company as a guarantor on behalf of Vidarbha Industries Power Ltd (VIPL) stands fully settled resulting in release and discharge of corporate guarantee, understandings and all obligations and claims thereby in relation to the outstanding debt of VIPL amount to Rs 3,872.04 crore."

The firm said it has settled all disputes with CFM Asset Reconstruction Private Limited (CFM). "100 per cent shares of VIPL have been pledged in favour of CFM against the release and discharge of corporate guarantee given by Reliance Power."

According to the terms of the settlement agreement Reliance Power, along with its subsidiaries Rosa Power Supply and VIPL, have formalised a pact to settle the outstanding debt. —PTI

Reliance cuts standalone debt by 87%

Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure Ltd has slashed its standalone debt by 87 per cent to Rs 475 crore after it cleared outstanding dues of Life Insurance Corporation of India, ICICI Bank and other lenders, the firm said on Wednesday. In stock exchange filings and press statements, Reliance Infrastructure said its standalone external debt has reduced from Rs 3,831 crore to Rs 475 crore. "Consequently, the net worth of the company will stand at Rs 9,041 crore. It also reached an agreement with Adani Electricity Mumbai. *—PTI*

ZEEL TO CHALLENGE CLAIMS

ZEEL refutes Star India's $940M damages claim over ICC TV deal

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd on Wednesday said Star India has sought USD 940 million damages at the ongoing case in the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA) over non-compliance with the agreement for the sub-licence of TV broadcasting rights of ICC international matches from 2024 to 2027.

In a regulatory filing, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) said it "categorically refutes all claims and assertions made by Star, including its claims for damages" and will strongly contest all "unfounded claims".

On 16 September, 2024, Star filed its statement of case before the LCIA, which it has sought to declare that the alliance agreement between Star and the company has been validly terminated by Star. Further, Star has sought damages to be determined as of the date of the tribunal's award quantified 31 August, 2024 as proxy date of the award, at USD 940 million along with costs, expenses and applicable interest until full payment, it added.

Star India, part of global media giant Disney Star had sought specific performances of the alliance agreement or to pay USD 1.4 billion deal.

Disney Star bagged the broadcast rights of all ICC events for four years from 2024 to 2027 for the Indian market from the sport's body.

As per the agreement, ZEEL was supposed to have exclusive television rights for ICC men's events, including the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which will be played in 2024 and 2026, ICC Men's Champions Trophy (2025), and the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup (2027). *—PTI*

As per the agreement, ZEEL was supposed to have exclusive television rights for all ICC that will be played in 2024 and 2026 ***PHOTO: PTI***

CCI agencies can now monitor order implementation

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Competition Commission can now appoint agencies to monitor the implementation of its orders, with the notification of amended regulations.

The move also comes amid instances of some entities flagging concerns about non-compliance with certain orders of the regulator, which works to ensure fair competition in the market place.

The Competition Commission of India (General) Regulations, 2024 were notified on Tuesday.

Now, agencies can be appointed by CCI to monitor the implementation of its orders. The agencies can be accounting firms, management consultancy or any other professional organisation or chartered accountants, company secretaries or cost accountants.

Among others, the agency would have the responsibility to inform CCI of any non-implementation or non-compliance with its orders.

Various other changes have also been made in the regulations, including introducing a time period of 180 days for passing a final order from the date of issuing an interim order. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Hindustan Zinc to split firm into two: CEO

UDAIPUR, 18 SEPT

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) has held fresh discussions with the government on a proposal to divide the company into two verticals, instead of three proposed earlier, CEO Arun Misra said on Wednesday.

The company's restructuring plan to create separate entities was put on hold as the government, which owns a 29.54 per cent stake in the miner, had expressed resistance to the bid.

In an interview to PTI here, Misra said with regard to Hindustan Zinc's demerger, the discussions happened very well with the government.

"So now they (the government) will come back (on this)."

"Yeah, we have discussed again...So three become two," the CEO said.

The Mines Ministry, which is a minority shareholder, had earlier written to the company, pointing out that any restructuring of business operations would require the ministry's clearance.

He further stated that HZL aspires to make both the companies asset-based "so asset means mines, smelter have to be separated.

Hindustan Zinc had last year announced plans to spin off its businesses into separate entities to increase its market capitalisation. *—PTI*

JINDAL FORAYS INTO BATTERY STORAGE

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Jindal India Renewable Energy, part of the BC Jindal Group, on Wednesday announced its foray into battery energy storage systems (BESS) space.

The company plans to build 1 GWh battery pack assembly line with LFP (lithium iron phosphate) chemistry by 2025 and will foray into battery cell manufacturing with 5 GWh capacity by 2027, according to a statement.

To achieve this, the company will enter into a technological collaboration with a world-class technology provider.

The move aligns with India's efforts to strengthen its position as one of the top renewable energy players in the world. Currently, the sector is witnessing rapid growth due to policy emphasis on renewables to enable the government's push towards a greener future, it said. *—PTI*

Govt scraps windfall tax on crude oil

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The government has slashed windfall tax on domestically produced crude oil to 'nil' per tonne with effect from 18 September. The tax is levied in the form of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) and is notified fortnightly based on average oil prices in two weeks. The last such revision took place effective 31 August when the windfall tax on crude petroleum was set at Rs 1,850 per tonne. The SAED on the export of diesel, petrol and jet fuel or ATF, has been retained at 'nil'. The new rates are effective from 18 September, an official notification said on Tuesday. India first imposed windfall profit taxes on 1 July, 2022, joining a host of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies. *—PTI*

In last revision, the tax was set at Rs 1,850 per tonne ***PHOTO: PTI***

IT Department hikes threshold for filing appeals in courts, tribunal by tax officers

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The income tax department has hiked the minimum threshold for filing appeals by the department in tribunal, High Courts and the Supreme Court.

As per a circular by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), tax authorities can file appeals before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), High Courts and Supreme Court, if the disputed tax demand exceeds Rs 60 lakh, Rs 2 crore and Rs 5 crore, respectively.

In 2019, the government had set the threshold for filing appeals at ITAT at Rs 50 crore, high courts (Rs 1 crore) and Supreme Court (Rs 2 crore).

CBDT also said that monetary limit with regard to filing appeals/SLP (Special Leave Petition) shall be applicable to all cases including those relating to TDS/TCS.

It further said that SLPs/appeals pending before Supreme Court, High Courts, and tribunals that are below the prescribed threshold should be withdrawn.

The CBDT had in March issued a circular permitting income tax authorities to file appeals irrespective of monetary threshold. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Amazon names Samir Kumar as its India manager

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

E-commerce giant Amazon on Wednesday announced that Samir Kumar will take on the responsibility to lead India as its country manager, following the resignation of Manish Tiwary. According to a leadership update by the company, Kumar is working closely with Manish Tiwary on the transition, and will assume operational responsibilities for India starting 1 October.Amit Agarwal, Amazon's senior Vice President for Emerging Markets, in an internal email, announced that Kumar will take on the responsibility to lead India as its Country Manager, to his current charter of leading consumer businesses in the UAE, South Africa. ***—PTI***

FACTORY CLOSURES, JOB LOSSES

India's diamond sector faces severe crisis

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

India's diamond sector is facing a severe crisis as both imports and exports have sharply declined in the past three years, which has triggered defaults, factory closures, and widespread job losses, think tank GTRI said on Wednesday.

It said that while export returns have surged, a large inventory of unprocessed rough diamonds is piling up due to reduced orders and growing competition from lab-grown diamonds.

"Tragically, more than 60 people in Gujarat's diamond sector have committed suicide, reflecting the severe financial and emotional strain " Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

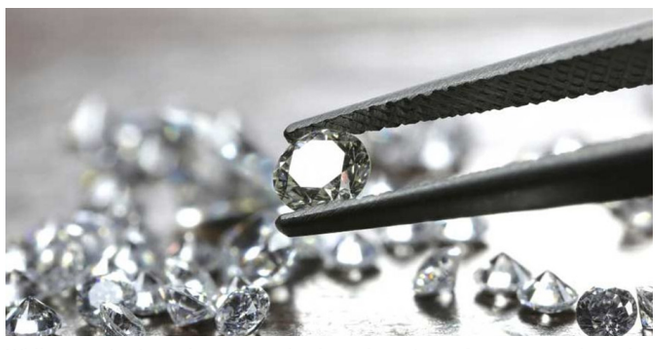
He said that immediate action is essential to address these problems and safeguard the future of the sector.

According to the think tank data, a 24.5 per cent drop in rough diamond imports from USD 18.5 billion in 2021-22 to USD 14 billion in 2023-024 shows weaker global markets and fewer processing orders.

Exports of cut and polished diamonds fell by a higher margin of 34.6 per cent, from USD 24.4 billion in FY 2022 to USD 13.1 billion in FY 2024, it said.

The Indian diamond industry consists of over 7,000 companies involved in various activities such as cutting, polishing, and exporting diamonds.

Surat alone accounts for nearly 8,00,000 workers, making it the world's largest hub for diamond cutting and polishing. The industry also supports millions of indirect jobs in related sectors such as logistics, transport, retail, and diamond tool manufacturing. *—PTI*



While export returns have surged, a large inventory of unprocessed rough diamonds is piling up due to reduced orders ***PHOTO: PTI***

From Oct, govt to boost wheat allocation under PMGKAY

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The government on Wednesday announced an increase in wheat allocation to beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) from October onwards, in a bid to stabilise prices.

Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra, while highlighting achievements in 100 days of Modi 3.0 government, said a committee of ministers has approved an additional 3.5 million tonne of wheat under PMGKAY.

This increased allocation will continue until March 2025, potentially making efforts to restore the wheat-rice ratio under the scheme, he said.

Asked if this increased quantity restores the wheat-rice ratio, the Secretary said, "It will still be lower by 1-2 million tonne from the normal quantity."

In May 2022, the government reduced wheat allocation to 7.1 million tonne from 18.2 million tonne and increased the rice allocation under PMGKAY because of tight supplies due to lower domestic production. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: X/@airnewsalerts

China Open: Malvika defeats Olympics medallist Tunjung

CHANGZHOU, 18 SEPT

Young Malvika Bansod pulled off a sensational straight-game victory over Paris Olympics bronze medallist Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia in the women's singles opening round to emerge as the lone Indian survivor in the China Open Super 100 badminton tournament here on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Indian, ranked 43rd in the world, displayed immense grit as she saved a game point thrice in the opening game to defeat the world No. 7 Indonesian Tunjung, seeded fifth, 26-24 21-19 in a 46-minute match, marking the biggest win of her career. Malvika, a BTech graduate in computer science from SRM University in Chennai, will next take on Scotland's Kristy Gilmour, a two-time Commonwealth Games medallist in the next round. *—PTI*

ACT: Pak players, officials to get $100 for winning Bronze

LAHORE, 18 SEPT

Believe it or not, players and officials of the Pakistan hockey team, which secured a bronze medal at the Asian Champions Trophy, will receive a reward of USD 100 (approximately 28,000 PKR) each for their efforts. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) made this announcement on Wednesday, confirming the special cash prize sanctioned by PHF President Mir Tariq Bugti. Pakistan secured third place in the tournament after defeating Korea 5-2 in the bronze-medal match, following a heartbreaking penalty shootout loss to hosts China in the semifinals. India went on to win the title for a record fifth time after defeating China on Tuesday. The PHF, in its press release, stated that the cash award was intended to "acknowledge and encourage" the team's performance during the tournament. *—PTI*

Former NRAI secy-general Baljit Sethi no more

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Baljit Singh Sethi, who served as secretary-general of the National Rifle Association of India for nearly 25 years- from 1985 till 2009 --, died here on Wednesday. He was 89 and is survived by his wife, a daughter and a son. NRAI senior vice-president Kalikesh Singh Deo, in his condolence message, said Sethi's demise was a huge loss for the shooting fraternity. "It is an irreparable loss to our shooting family. His contribution to the development and growth of the sport in the country is immeasurable. Till his last breath he had been advising and guiding juniors like us on how to continuously improve the running of the sport and provide better support to the shooting athletes," said Deo. *—PTI*

AIFF renames Jr Girls Nat'l C'ship to honour Talimeren

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

The AIFF on Wednesday rechristened the Junior Girls' National Championship in the name of India's first men's Olympic football captain Talimeren Ao in its bid to recognize his contribution to the game. Starting from the 2025-26 season, the tournament will be known as the "Talimeren National Football Championship for Junior Girls", the AIFF said. This change marks the first national tribute to Dr Ao by the Federation, acknowledging his pioneering role and achievements in the sport. The championship, now in its 18th edition, has been dominated by Manipur with 11 titles and two runners-up finishes. In addition to the tournament renaming, the AIFF plans to commission a biography detailing Ao's remarkable journey from his native Changki village in Nagaland to becoming a prominent figure in Indian football. *—PTI*

1st Test series: India hope to defeat spin-filled B'desh

Kohli & Gambhir both vow for aggression from the seamers

Bangladesh's player Shakib Al Hasan during a training session ahead of the first test match in Chennai on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

CHENNAI, 18 SEPT

Littered largely with lopsided contests, India's hopes of walking down that familiar path will hinge on sorting an uncharacteristic batting infirmity against spin when they face Bangladesh in a two-Test series starting here from Thursday at 9.30 am.

Bangladesh, who are fresh from a recent 2-0 drubbing of Pakistan, are no pushovers this time and they look for a possible berth in the World Test Championship Final.

India's 40-4 (win-loss) home record in the last decade is awe-inducing but there is an ever-little crack, which is getting more pronounced in the past three years, particularly in the case of star batter Virat Kohli.

Kohli was a constant in India's bullrun at home since 2015, crunching runs for fun against all comers. But since 2021, his numbers against spin have dipped -an average of 30 in 15 Tests in this period.

Skipper Rohit Sharma has also been prolific in dismantling spin, especially since his promotion as an opener in 2017 against South Africa. He averaged over 90 against tweakers.

But since 2021, it has come down to a less flashy 44 in 15 matches. KL Rahul, a batter who is backed by Rohit as equally proficient against spin and pace, offers a slightly bleaker picture.

There are bright points too in Rishabh Pant (five matches, average 70), Shubman Gill (10 matches, average 56) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (five matches, average 115).

In the bowling department, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja are certain to figure in the first eleven. *—PTI*

ALL EYES ON ASHWIN

22 WICKETS needed to break Anil Kumble's record of 476 int'l wickets on matches played on home soil

9 MORE WICKETS to go past Zaheer Khan in test cricketmatches played on home soil

TEN 5-WICKET hauls in World Test Championship (WTC) and another fifer in this series will make him the player with most fifers in the premier test tournament

14 WICKETS short of Nathan Lyon's record of 187 wickets in the WTC history

HEAD TO HEAD MATCHES

Total matches:	13
Win:	11
Loss:	0
Draws:	2

Winning percentage: 83%

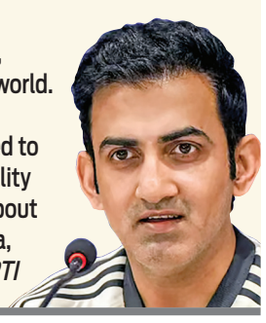
HOW DOES THE BLACK SOIL PITCH BEHAVE?

- Chepauk Stadium usually offers black soil which is made up of higher clay content, and the pitch usually remains intact for a longer time
- These pitches offer assistance to spinners, but the bounce may not be as challenging for batters

WHERE TO WATCH: JIO CINEMA AND NETWORK 18 TIME: 9.30 AM

GAUTI DISMISSES SPIN CONCERNS HURTING INDIA BATTING

India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Wednesday dismissed concerns surrounding Indian batters' recent struggle against quality spin bowling, saying that the line-up has enough firepower to take on the best in the world. Gambhir also said that the bowling quartet of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja has managed to offset India's obsession with batting. "Our batting unit has so much quality that it can take on any spin unit," Gambhir asserted after being asked about the line-up's struggles in last month's white-ball series against Sri Lanka, especially in the ODI leg that India lost. *—PTI*



Chess: Praggs vs Yu ends in draw

BUDAPEST, 18 SEPT

The Indian chess team on Wednesday were against China in the 7th round of the ongoing Chess Olympiad in Budapest, the Indian women's chess team faced Georgia. The three games involving Indian players that ended in draws. In the open and the women's section, both the Indian teams were the sole leaders heading into the second half of the Chess Olympiad. Both teams were unbeaten. One of the players who has been affected is the Chinese Grand Master, Ding Liren, who had to change his hotel, according to Chessdom.

The Indian team in the open section had 12 match points while China, Vietnam and Iran were just behind with 11 match points. The Indian women's team also had 12 match points.

The day was filled with chess events across the city.

Praggnanandha *PHOTO: PTI*

In the morning, the Indian team both men and women were keenly ready for the games to begin.

Judit Polgar's Global Chess Festival opened at the National Gallery. Over the past ten years, it has become a must-attend event, offering a full-day family experience centered around chess. The festival features games, workshops, chess tournaments, and more. *—Courtesy, Chessolympiad2024*

Golf: Tvesa, Pranavi lead Indian challenge

DÉNIA, 18 SEPT

Tvesa Malik and Pranavi Urs will spearhead the Indian challenge at the La Sella Open, starting Thursday, as the Ladies European Tour (LET) resumes action after a break for the Solheim Cup.

Tvesa and Pranavi, who have had modest seasons, will be joined by Ridhima Dilawari and invitee Seher Atwal. Diksha Dagar has taken a break while Vani Kapoor and Amandeep Drall are playing on the domestic Hero WPG Tour.

Seher, a winner on the domestic Hero WPGT like Tvesa, Pranavi and Ridhima, will go out with April Angurasaranee of Thailand and Emily Penttila of Finland, while Tvesa plays with Blanca Fernandez of Spain. Pranavi tees off with Dorthea Forbrigd of Norway and Agathe Sauzon of France from the first tee as will Ridhima Dilawari with Linda Osala of Finland. *—PTI*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Real Madrid cruise past Stuttgart

MADRID, 18 SEPT

Kylian Mbappé renewed his quest to win a European title by scoring for Real Madrid in his first Champions League match with the club.

Mbappé found the open net after a cross by Rodrygo just seconds into the second half of Madrid's 3-1 win over Stuttgart at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Mbappé celebrated with a gesture in which he appeared to blow candles and sending a kiss. Spanish media said it was to honor his mother's 50th birthday.

The goal gave defending champion Madrid a 1-0 lead before Stuttgart equalized with Deniz Undav in the 68th. Antonio Rüdiger put Madrid back in front in the 83rd and substitute Endrick closed the scoring deep into stoppage time to seal the victory for the defending champions. It was Mbappé's 49th Champions League goal, putting him in the top 10 of top scorers all time in the competition.

He has scored in three consecutive matches and has five goals in seven games with Madrid so far in all competitions. "I can do more," Mbappé said. "I'm feeling better match after match." Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois was named the man of the match as he was key to keep Stuttgart from capitalising on its many scoring opportunities. *—AP*

Real Madrid players Vini Jr, Jude Bellinghum, Mbappe and Rodrigo celebrate after scoring the goal on Wednesday *PHOTO: @REALMADRID*

Asian Games medallist Kiran fails dope test

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Asian Games bronze-winner shot-putter Kiran Baliyan has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) for testing positive for a banned substance as a slew of athletes across sports figured in the latest list of dope offenders.

Surprisingly, Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia's name is missing from the latest update though he figured in a previous list issued by the NADA recently.

The NADA had, on 23 June, suspended Punia for a second time, three weeks after its

Kiran Baliyan *PHOTO: PTI*

Anti-Disciplinary Doping panel had revoked his suspension on the grounds that he was not served a "notice of charge" by the national body.

NADA had on April 23 suspended the Tokyo Olympics bronze-medallist wrestler for his refusal to give his urine sample for dope test during the selection trials held in Sonepat on March 10. The sport's global governing body United Wrestling World had also suspended him.

The 25-year-old Baliyan, who had become only the second Indian to win a medal in women's shot put in the Asian Games at Hangzhou last year, returned positive for metandienone, an anabolic androgenic steroid banned at all times.

She stares at a maximum ban period of four years, if she is proven guilty. *—PTI*

Milan struggle against dominant Liverpool

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Dutch and Liverpool FC (LFC) captain Virgil van Dijk and Ibrahima Konate of France were crucial in Liverpool's 3-1 victory over AC Milan (ACM) in their UEFA Champions League (UCL) opener in Milan on Tuesday.

Liverpool faced early pressure at San Siro Stadium, with Van Dijk's crucial clearance and a subsequent offside call stopping a dangerous Milan attack. However, the United States' Christian Pulisic managed to get past Greece's Kostas Tsimikas and Van Dijk to score for Milan. Liverpool FC quickly found their rhythm. Mohamed Salah of Egypt hit the bar twice, but the Reds equalised with English player Trent Alexander-Arnold's free-kick that Konate headed in. They then took the lead when Van Dijk scored from a corner.

Liverpool sealed their win when Ryan Gravenberch of the Netherlands passed to Hungary's Dominik Szoboszlai, who set up with another Dutch Cody Gakpo to cross for Szoboszlai to score again. *—ANI*

KANE NETS 4 TO CONTINUE RED-HOT FORM

MUNICH, 18 SEPT

Harry Kane broke Wayne Rooney's record for the most Champions League goals by an English player when the Bayern Munich striker scored four times against Dinamo Zagreb.

It was one of several records broken as Bayern routed Dinamo Zagreb 9-2 in one of the highest-scoring games in Champions League— and an emphatic start to European competition for new coach Vincent Kompany. "Amazing game, a bit of a crazy game for sure," Kane said. *—AP*

TEAMS UP WITH UN AGENCY

FIFA to educate world soccer about concussion

GENEVA, 18 SEPT

FIFA teamed up with the World Health Organization on Wednesday for a campaign to educate the soccer industry about the risks of concussion injuries.

"Concussion is a public health issue of concern at all levels of football, and many other sports, requiring greater levels of awareness and action," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

Ten years after the alarming case in the 2014 World Cup final of Germany player Christoph Kramer, world soccer governing body FIFA is sending a toolkit to each of its 211 national federations to help teach at all levels of soccer that symptoms of a head injury can take up to 72 hours to appear.

PHOTO: FIFA

- At the 2022 World Cup, Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand was treated for several minutes on the field after clashing heads with a teammate, then continued to play on against England before finally being replaced

At the 2022 World Cup, Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand was treated for several minutes on the field after clashing heads with a teammate, then continued to play on against England before finally being replaced.

FIFA favors letting teams make an extra substitution to remove immediately a player with a suspected head injury. That lets team medical staff evaluate injuries at length without the pressure of trying to send players back into the game.

At soccer's rules-making panel, known as IFAB, FIFA has consistently blocked proposals to allow temporary substitutions that would let injured players with a suspected concussion be assessed just for several minutes before potentially returning to the game.

FIFA medical advice is that symptoms can take up to 72 hours to develop. *—PTI*

Ponting joins Punjab as head coach on 4-yr contract

NEW DELHI, 18 SEPT

Australian great Ricky Ponting was on Wednesday appointed head coach of Punjab Kings, replacing compatriot Trevor Bayliss in the under-performing IPL franchise.

The former Australian captain has made the switch to Punjab Kings from Delhi Capitals, a team he was part of for seven years.

"Ponting signed the contract yesterday and it is for four years. He will need that much time to build the squad. Ponting will take a call on the rest of the support staff," an IPL source told PTI.

Under Ponting, Delhi Capitals became a force to be reckoned with though the elusive title never came despite the team reaching the final in 2020. He has also coached Mumbai Indians.

Punjab too have never won the IPL since the league's inception in 2008 and the four co-owners will be hoping the World Cup winning captain takes them all the way. Punjab's sole final appearance came way back in 2014 and they are one team which is often criticised for frequent chopping and changing. They have failed to finish even in the top five in the last seven editions and ended ninth out of 10 teams earlier this year.

Prior to Bayliss, Anil Kumble coached Punjab Kings but success eluded them. *—PTI*

Ricky Ponting *PHOTO: PTI*